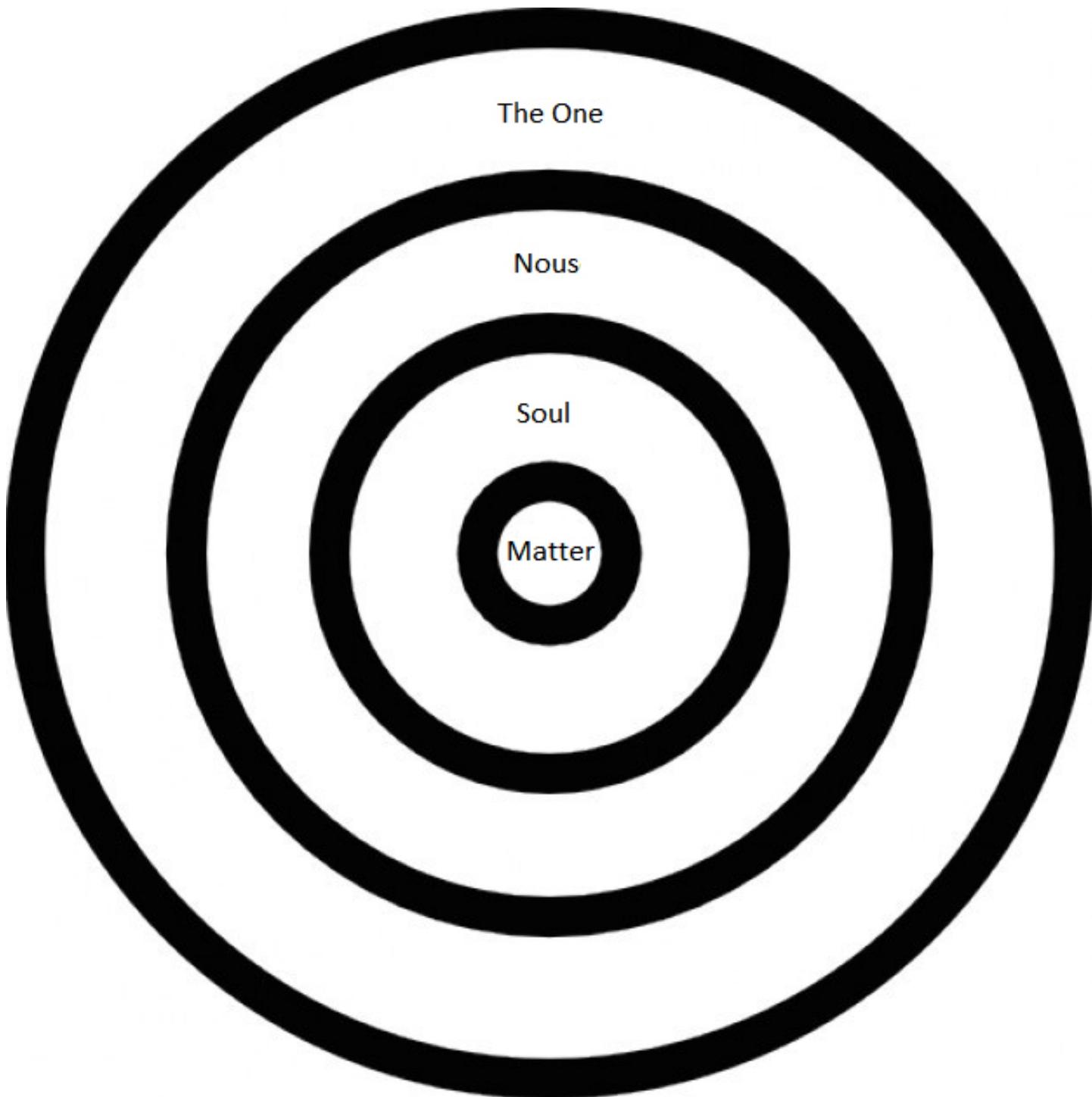


# Notes on Plotinus

## Ennead One



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## Introduction to Notes on Plotinus

I have always wanted to read Plotinus but found all of the available translations to be extremely confusing and hard to follow. After considerable research, I was unable to find anything satisfactory. So, mostly as an exercise for my own understanding, I have decided to go through the Enneads and spell things out as best I can. In the event that other people are having similar struggles, I have decided to post my notes in case they end up being helpful to anyone else.

My process has been to read three to four different editions/translations of each passage and do my best to parse it out into something coherent. I am struggling to find the right words to describe this project. In some ways, it is an English to English translation of sorts. I am also adding in examples and clarifications which are of my own creation where I find it helpful. I have settled on just calling it my notes. My goal is not to preserve the literal word for word text of the originals. Rather, my goal is to clearly convey the arguments and conclusions in a way that can be read with (relative) ease to a modern English speaker circa 2020. The thoughts and arguments are Plotinus' (and countless others including Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Ammonius Saccas, and Numenius), but the text within is completely my own. Although this is not a word for word translation, I have preserved the organization structure of the original text. In the original text, each Enneads is broken down into tractates, which are further broken down into sections. This is preserved completely in my notes. If you read one of the sections from my notes and read the corresponding section from one of the direct translations, I hope you will find that my notes are faithful. For example, my notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section One should contain the same message as Ennead One, First Tractate, Section One from the original sources. Hopefully this makes my notes useful and easy to use as a study guide if you choose to read the original text alongside them. At the same time, my notes are also intended to stand on their own, and (hopefully) it is not necessary to read the original texts to understand the spirit and arguments of the originals. I have also included some terminology and concepts in the beginning. I recommend you read them first. Even if they don't make perfect sense at first, having them in your mind will be helpful when the terms come up in the text.

Porphyry's introduction to the text can be found with relative ease, and is well worth the read. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie's work on the chronology of the Enneads is also insightful and worth seeking out. For the sake of brevity, I will summarize some of the useful information. Plotinus himself never wrote the Enneads as a single unified text. Porphyry, one of Plotinus' chief student's, compiled the various lecture notes and small tidbits of what Plotinus dictated to him into what we now refer to as The Enneads. The order that they are presented in and, to a degree, the overarching message that they tell is consequently the work of Porphyry. The contents of the Enneads came from various points within the decades that Plotinus was alive and engaging in Philosophy. Porphyry opted to group the various tractates by subject matter as opposed to chronologically. As a result, some of the tractates within a single Ennead are presented out of chronological order and may have been generated years apart. While I have opted to maintain Porphyry's organization, Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie did great work in determining the actual chronological order that the Enneads were written/dictated in. His work is highly recommended as a result, even if only to take a cursory look at the actual chronology. The ultimate consequence of all of this is that there are some contradictions from tractate to tractate. Even Plotinus learned and refined his views over time.

I hope you find the contents of these texts informative. Plotinus' Wisdom is timeless and of great benefit to mankind eternally.

## Terminology and General Concepts

**Animated Body (Animate Man, Living Organism):** The living being (human in the case of Animate Man) which thinks, senses, perceives, moves, and exists in the body. An ensouled body.

**Being:** A thing which exists. Anything which can be thought of or referred to.

**Beyond Being:** That which encompasses all Beings. The Principle of Being. Since a Principle cannot be a variant manifestation of itself, and since Beings are variant manifestations of the Principle of Being, the Principle of Being is above and beyond Being.

**Divine:** The metaphysical. The incorporeal. That which is beyond the imperfections of Matter.

The Three Hypostasis of The Divine:

1. **The One:** The unified totality of everything. The most primordial and all-encompassing principle of existence without any distinctions or particularizations. Everything. 'The Good'.
2. **Nous, The Divine Mind:** The realm of all intelligible, logically coherent beings. The realm of Ideal Forms. The first emanation of The One. The One particularized. Everything which exists Intellectually and as a particular thing. All things which can be grasped by the mind.
3. **The All Soul, The World Soul:** The Principle of Souls which encompasses all Souls. The collection of all beings and the various metaphysical principles which both explain their relationships and cause their existence. As beings combine and particularize, you get the creation of new Ideal Forms. For example, by combining the Ideal Forms of Red and Cars you create the new being 'Red Cars'. The primordial concepts and processes which cause everything else to exist.

**Evil:** To be furthest from The Good. The principle of lacking any inherent properties or form. Pure formlessness. Matter may lack inherent form, but it can temporarily be in a particular form. Pure Evil is completely antithetical to form and can never even temporarily resemble anything.

**Gods:** The highest aspects of the Divine. First principles. The highest principles in Nous.

**Good:** The essence of Goodness which all things ultimately strive for. Things participate in The Good via completing their natural functions which are inherent to them.

**Ideal Form:** The eternal, unchanging, metaphysical essence of something which exists (either physically or metaphysically). The categories of things which encompass all possible varieties within their domain. The Ideal Form of Red is that Redness which all Red things participate in. The Ideal Form of Houses is the essence of a House which makes them identifiable as Houses. The Ideal Form of a Triangle is the combination of the geometric relationships which hold true for all possible triangles. Alternatively and interchangeably referred to as Essences, Categories, Intellectual Principles.

**Intellectual:** Relating to things which are metaphysical. Incorporeal but existent.

**Matter:** The lowest and latest emanation from The One. That which has no inherent form or properties in of itself but can be temporarily formed in any which way. This lack of inherent form and properties

**Virtue:** Things which purify us to make us better and bring us into harmony with The Good. The higher Order Virtues of the Soul are the Principles which encompass all possible virtuous things, such as the Ideal Form of Justice, Courage, etc. Virtues in Humanity are good things we do, such as a particular Just action, or a particular courageous thing which has been done.

**Morality:** The battle between falling towards Evil and rising towards The One. Good tends backwards\earlier in emanation towards The One (The Good), and Evil tends forwards/later in emanation towards Matter.

**Philosophy:** The act of directing the reasoning process towards Nous and beyond.

**Soul:** The thing that makes you alive. A Dead body has no soul, a living being has a soul by definition.

The three phases of the Human Soul

A. The Intelligible Soul: The highest part of the soul of man. The intellectual principles which a person participates in. The ability to self-reflect on what one is experiencing, and relate it to other concepts. The ability to reflect on the Ideal Forms which something participates in. Our Intellectual abilities. Roughly the Superego.

B. The Reasoning Soul: The part of the soul which reasons discursively. The ability to make basic deductions and solve basic problems. Roughly the Ego.

C. The Unreasoning Soul: Our experience of basic sensory perceptions and emotions. The purely sensory and automatically reactive. Our unexamined experiences. Roughly the Id.

**Variant Manifestation:** A Particular instance of an Ideal form. A particular Red object in relation to Redness. A particular act of courage in relation to the Ideal Form of Courage. A particular House in relation to the Ideal Form of Houses.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, First Tractate - The Animated Body and the Self

### **1.1.1      The Categories of Human Experience**

The nature of a human being can be divided into three sections:

1. Base level sensory perceptions and emotions (usually relegated by Plotinus to the Unreasoning Soul)
2. Discursive reasoning about simple concepts, perceptions, and feelings (usually relegated by Plotinus to the Reasoning Soul)
3. Intellectual reasonings and decision making based on abstract concepts, and ideal forms. (usually relegated by Plotinus to the Intellectual Soul).

The 'seat' of each of these sections, must reside in one of three possible places.

- a. the Soul alone
- b. the Soul, separated from the body, while it using the body like a tool
- c. the Soul connected with the body to use it, forming a new distinct entity from the synthesis

Further, if c., then it could either be a mere blending of the two (i.e. reductionism, half Soul half body), or a distinct new compound phenomena arising from the combination.

Since all human feeling and thinking begins with our emotional and sensory reactions (our 'inputs' so to speak) we must begin by assessing their set.

### **1.1.2      The Soul Alone Is Not the Seat of Perceptions and Senses**

Do our base level sensory perceptions and emotions (I. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1) have their seat in the Soul alone (a. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1)?

Answering this question requires us to determine whether or not we should distinguish between the Soul of an individual person, and of the group of things referred to Souls (the category of things known as Souls). To illustrate why, consider cars. All cars have four wheels, but only some cars are the color red. So, we can say that having wheels is an attribute of the category cars, however being red is only an attribute of particular cars.

Assume we can make a distinction between the individual Soul of a person and the category 'Souls'. Then the individual Soul must be a composite of all of the smaller particulars which make up that person (these particulars being what differentiates a particular Soul from other individual Souls, like the redness of some cars). In this case a Soul is particular to an individual, and it makes sense then that the base level emotions and sensory perceptions of an individual could be experienced by the individual Soul. This is because its variances from individual to individual permit changes (as opposed to something eternal), and an allowance for change permits the reception of information (as the reception of information changes the recipient).

However, if a distinction is NOT to be made between individual Souls and the category of Souls, then a Soul would be an essence (Ousia), and consequently it would be the Ideal Form of 'Souls'. An Ideal Form is unchanging and eternal. Thus, in this case there would be no room for the Soul to be altered by the reception of sensory information. As a result, if a distinction is NOT to be made between individual Souls and the category of Souls then, sense perceptions cannot have their seat in the Soul. After all, how can an eternal and unchanging Ideal Form be modified by an individual instance of it? To illustrate the point, consider that it is impossible to

make any changes to the geometric rules which make up a triangle by modifying a particular triangularly shaped object. Consequently, if all Souls are merely the Ideal Form of 'Soul', then a Soul can only be a one-way provider of information, and it could only provide information to things which come into existence after the Ideal Form is codified.

Now, if we consider further the consequences of the human Soul being an Ideal Form, we must realize that an unchanging thing has no basis for our base level emotions and perceptions. It is unchangeable, so it is not receptive to the transient circumstances which induce emotions and senses. Nothing can destroy it, so it has no basis for fear. It is always whole, so it has no basis for want of 'less' or 'more' of anything. It cannot be dissected, so how could it lose anything to feel loss?

As a result, we must conclude that base level sensory perceptions and emotions cannot have their seat in the Ideal Form of the Soul alone (a. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1).

Since base level sensory perceptions and emotions are a part of the human experience (of which the Soul partakes), and since them having their seat in the Soul alone is impossible, we must then regard human Souls as individual aggregates of smaller parts.

Thus, the Soul of a human is an individual Soul, and it is an aggregate comprised of smaller parts.

Discursive reasoning about simple concepts, perceptions, and feelings (II. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1) exclusively deals with base level sensory perceptions and emotions. Thus, Discursive reasoning too (usually relegated by Plotinus to the Reasoning Soul) cannot have its seat in the Ideal Form of a Soul for the same reasons as outlined above.

Intellectual reasoning and pure experiences of higher order truths (III. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1), however, are not negated by the above reasoning, as this level of reasoning only deals with things within the realm of Ideal Forms. Consequently, we cannot rule out this category of the human experience as having its seat in the Ideal Form of Souls, and this topic requires further inquiry later on.

### **1.1.3        The Soul Cannot Use the Body if Separated Completely From It**

Do our base level sensory perceptions and emotions (I. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1) have their seat in the Soul, separated from the body, while it uses the body like a tool (b. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1)?

In the case that 'the Soul uses the body', it is not necessarily the case that the Soul shares in the base level emotions, instincts, and sensory perceptions of the physical body. Allegorically, a person blowing air through an instrument does not directly experience all of the base sensations that the instrument would. Yet the musician needs some knowledge of the state of the instrument to play it, and thus the human Soul needs some way of interfacing with the base level perceptions and experiences of its body to appropriately process them. Since b. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1 preclude the Soul receiving any information, it cannot account for our base level sense perceptions and emotions and must be disregarded.

Since base level sensory perceptions and emotions are a part of the human experience, and since the human Soul partakes in the human experience, and since options A and B from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1 are insufficient to allow the Soul to partake in base level sensory perceptions and emotions, then we must conclude that C is the correct choice.

Base level sensory perceptions and emotions arise from the Soul connecting with the body to use it, forming a new distinct entity from the synthesis.

We can refer to new entity created from the synthesis of Soul and body as the Animated Body (alternatively referred to as the Animate Man and the Living Organism).

Since the Soul would have to direct the body based in part on these base level perceptions and emotions, it would have to get the information somehow. Yet if the Soul is separated from the body, the 'how' is mysterious. It cannot be that the Ideal Form of Souls experienced these things directly, as that would cause all human being to experience all of the perceptions and emotions of every other human being (another reason to not regard the Soul of a human being as merely the Ideal Form of Souls). Further, in analyzing the possibility that the Soul uses the body like musician playing an instrument, there must be some separation for there to be a 'user' (e.g. musician) and a 'used' (e.g. instrument). In this case, the practice of Philosophy might be described as the act which bridges the gap between the Soul and the body and allowing the Soul to use the body in such a manner. In this sense, the definition of Philosophy might be to intake information via the Unreasoning Soul, direct these base level perceptions and emotions through the Reasoning Soul via Discursive Reasoning, with the aim of this processes being to allow the Intellectual Soul the possibility of gaining wisdom about the eternal metaphysical truths.

However, before an individual can engage in Philosophy to help bridge the gap between the Soul and body, what is the relationship between Soul (whose highest part makes decisions) and body (which directly feels and senses)? There must be some innate connection, however there are multiple possibilities.

- A. They are completely coalesced, and connected at every place.
- B. They can be interwoven uniformly, but not completely connected at every place.
- C. The Soul could merely direct the body without making any contact (i.e. they are only connected via the flow of information/instruction from one to the other).
- D. Some specific parts of the Soul can be 'coupled' only to some specific parts of the body, with the rest of the parts of each unconnected.

Further, if D., then part of the Soul that is not connected to the body would be the 'musician' or 'user', and the part of the Soul connected to the body would then lower itself to the level of 'instrument' or 'used'. In turn, Philosophy elevates the connected part of the body to the level of 'musician' or 'user', and equally allows the dethatched sections of the Soul and body to remain detached as is useful.

#### **1.1.4      The Possible Relationships Between Soul and Body**

If the Soul and body are completely coalesced (A. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 3), then the Soul is brought down to the material realm in this binding, and the body is elevated in part to the realm of the Soul. Would this mixture cause the Soul to then give rise to base level sensations and emotions, or would the mixture cause the body to give rise to the base level sensations and emotions? It cannot be that the Soul gains a new capability (sensations and emotions) because it is being degraded (from the realm of immortality to the realm of death), and thus it can only stand to lose capabilities. The body, on the other hand becomes enriched via its association with the Soul and can gain capabilities as a result. As such, in the case of coalescence, base level sensations and emotions (I. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1) must reside in the enriched body as a result of the admixture. Thus, the coalescing of Soul and body does not provide a proper explanation for how the Soul receives base level sense perceptions and emotions, as it can only account for the experiences of the body.

What if a Soul is interwoven with the body (B. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 3)? Some things are incommensurate (meaning they have no possible things in common), such as color and things which are invisible. If the Soul and body are interwoven, then they would have to be commensurable in some way. Since the Soul and body seem to be incommensurate in actuality, we already have a good reason to reject this possibility. Further, even if the Soul is mixed with the body, it does not necessarily mean that it would share the body's sensations. The Soul could remain unchanged as it penetrates the body. For example, when light floods into a dark room, its fundamental nature is not altered by occupying the previously dark area. Thus, even if a Soul is interwoven with the body, we should still regard base level senses and emotions as residing in the body. Thus, a Soul interwoven with the body does not provide a proper explanation for how the Soul receives base level sense perceptions and emotions.

What if the Soul could merely direct the body without any contact (C. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 3)? If that is the case, then the human Soul would be like an Ideal Form realized in matter, like a piece of metal (representing the body) formed into the shape of an axe (representing the Ideal Form of a Soul). In this case, there is no point of connection for the Soul to take part in base level senses and emotions, and once again we must regard them as residing in the body. Thus, the Soul merely directing the body without any contact cannot provide a proper explanation for how the Soul receives base level sense perceptions and emotions.

Since the Soul must receive information regarding base level senses perceptions and emotions in some way, and since A, B, and C from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate section 3 are insufficient to explain such a transmission of information, we must conclude that D is true.

The Soul and body are abler to share information regarding base level senses and perceptions via some parts of the Soul being coupled with some parts of the body, with the rest of the parts of each remaining unconnected.

#### **1.1.5      The Nature of the Animated Body**

Regarding the nature of the Animated Body. we have three possibilities.

- i. The base level experiences of the Animated Body may merely be a purely physical phenomena felt within the body alone (the information being transferred to the Soul second hand).
- ii. The base level experiences of the Animated Body may be the result of a reductionist conjunction of the Soul and the body (with the Soul and body experiencing them simultaneously).
- iii. The base level experiences of the Animated Body may be experienced by a third distinct entity (aggregate) formed from Soul and body which is distinct and presents new capabilities not found in either the Soul or the body.

Regardless of the above three options, we have two other possible considerations:

1. The Soul is experientially impossible and only the body experiences things directly.
2. The Soul is sympathetic, and experiences that which the body does.

Considering ii. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 5: How could a conjunction between parts of the body and the Soul account for a negative emotion?

Is the premise that 'experiences start in the body and make their way to the Soul' an adequate explanation of the experiences from the Animated Body? It could be that a sensory organ generates sensory perceptions in response to some stimulus, which then afterwards reach the Soul. But that really just describes the fact that someone senses something negative. It does not explain why the thing that is sensed was taken to be negative in the first place. Descriptions are not explanations. Saying that my eyes saw someone act immorally, and as a result I felt angry does not explain *why* such a sensory experience evokes the feeling of anger in me. Thus, this is an inadequate explanation.

Is the premise that 'experiences start in the Soul and make their way to the body' an adequate explanation of the experiences from the Animated Body? It could be that emotions are merely the result of an intellectual judgement that wrongdoing has occurred, giving rise to a particular state of the body associated with a felt emotion in response. But this does not explain *why* the experiencer of the negative emotion judged that something or action constituted wrongdoing in the first place. Further, it raises the question as to where the seat of this value judgement was: in the Soul alone, or a result of the conjunction of the Soul and body? Also, not all judgments result in an emotional response. One can judge an act as wrong, but not feel any emotion as result. Thus, this is an inadequate explanation.

Is the premise that 'experiences exist simultaneously in the Soul and body' an adequate explanation of the experiences from the Animated Body? Is it possible that each desire felt in the Soul has a corresponding physical state of the body? Some experiences can be explained via bodily functions, such as the feeling of hunger being the result of a lack of food in the stomach. Morality based emotions, however, do not have an obvious physical source. Various experiences seem to come from the body or the Soul exclusively.

Could a *reasoned desire* in the Soul coincide with a *sensed apatite* in the body simultaneously? This is impossible, because this implies that a sensed apatite cannot exist without a reasoned desire, and because it implies a reasoned desire cannot exist without a sensed apatite. It is possible to experience a sensed apatite without engaging in any reasoning. Someone can feel thirsty without doing and reasoning. It is possible to reason one's

way into a particular conclusion without feeling any sensed appetites'. I can think to myself that it is hot out and reason that I should probably take a drink without feeling thirsty. Thus, this is an inadequate explanation.

Since experiences starting in the Soul and making way to the body is an inadequate explanation for the experiences of the Animated Body, and since experiences starting in the body and making way to the Soul is an inadequate explanation for the experiences of the Animated Body, and since experiences existing simultaneously in the Soul and body is an inadequate explanation for the experiences of the Animated Body, then we must conclude that II. from first tractate, section 5 is not an adequate explanation for the experiences of the Animated Body.

The base level experiences of the Animated Body are not the result of a reductionist conjunction of the Soul and the body.

### **1.1.6 Experiences Do Not Exist Within the Body Alone**

Considering i. from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 5: Does the premise that base level experiences of the Animated Body exist as a purely physical phenomena felt within the body alone (with the information being transferred to the Soul second hand) provide an adequate explanation for the experiences of the Animated Body?.

This is a challenging assertion. A Soulless body (i.e. a dead body) is unable to sense anything. Thus, the presence of Soul is required for sense perceptions to occur at all. How could the sensory experiences of the Animate both require Soul, but not have their seat in the Soul? The Soul would have to act as a one-way inducer of the mechanisms which produce senses (e.g. the Soul could start up the mechanics of the eyes and brain, allowing them to work in conjunction to see). Yet in this case, the Soul would be unable to receive any of this sensory data. Since the Soul uses sensory information to reason and make decisions, it must be able to receive it.

Since base level experiences of the Animated Body existing as a purely physical phenomena does not permit said experiences to reach the Soul, and since the Soul must receive that information to perform the functions it has, we must conclude that base level experiences of the Animated Body cannot exist as a purely physical phenomena.

The base level experiences of the Animated Body are not merely be a purely physical phenomena felt within the body alone.

### **1.1.7 The Animated Body - a New Aggregate Entity Formed of Soul and Body**

Since a reductionist conjunction of Soul and body does not explain the experiences of an Animated Body, and since a purely physical phenomena within the body does not explain the experiences of an Animated Body, then we must conclude that the experiences of an Animated Body can only be explained by Soul and body coming to form a distinct new aggregate entity which possess capabilities not found in either the Soul or body alone.

The base level experiences of the Animated Body are experienced by a third distinct entity (aggregate) formed from Soul and body which is distinct and presents new capabilities not found in either the Soul or the body.

How do Soul and body come together to form a new aggregate we call the Animated Body, which is greater than the sum of its parts?

First, it requires that the body be in an appropriate state for life. From there Soul animates the body, producing an Animated Body. This is not to say that the Soul enters into the body to animate it. Rather, the Soul consists in the metaphysical principles which govern the animation of the body. Put more plainly, take the examples of thought. A person's thoughts do not exist in the matter of the brain itself, nor in the electricity which traverse through our neurons, nor do they exist solely in the pure metaphysical realm of Ideal Forms. Rather, the thoughts exist in the pattern (governed by metaphysical principles) in which the electricity flows between the neurons in the brain. By taking the physicals neurons of the brain, along with the electrical impulses of the brain, and by forming them into specific motions of the electricity through the brain, we end up with a thinking brain which possesses capabilities none of its single parts contain.

Thus, our experiences are not separated from the physical organs we possess, nor from the higher principles which determine the mechanisms by which they must operate in order to produce said experiences.

How can a new aggregate we call the Animated Body explain sensory perceptions? The Soul does not directly experience the sense-perceptions, but rather these are impressed on the physical sense organs of the body. The Soul takes the base level sensory perceptions and relates them to higher Ineligibles from the realm of Ideal Forms.

These sensory perceptions are related and identified with Ideal Forms which the Soul can grasp. We can then engage in Discursive Reasoning as the Soul directs thought from Ideal Form to Ideal form as is characteristic of Discursive reasoning.

The principle that directs information through the phases of the Soul, from the base level sensory perceptions and emotions, through the rounds of Discursive reasoning, and finally to true Intellectual understanding is that which we refer to as 'our self'.

And while 'our self' possesses the powers of each phase of the Soul, what we refer to as a Human Being is the higher order decision making which is the hallmark of the Human. Humanity's excellence among the animals in reasoning serve to differentiate humanity from the beasts which can only engage in base level sense perceptions (the irrational Soul) and those animals which can only dabble in discursive reasoning (the reasoning Soul).

### **1.1.8      Intellectual Participation and the Animated Body**

In understanding how the Animated Body may possess intelligence, we must investigate the Ideal Form of Intelligence itself. The form itself exists first as a purely intelligible concept, completely separate (and anterior to) the physical realm in which the Animated Body reside. Yet it is participatable, and every Animated Body participates in the Ideal Form of Intelligence by possession of intelligence and intellectual abilities.

This principle holds true for each Ideal Form. We all participate in the eternal metaphysical variant of the Ideal Form, but possess our own personal conception of it individually. For example, if we take the Ideal Form of a house, it has its own objective metaphysical meaning. Yet if you ask an individual to picture a house or to describe what a house is, each individual will have a slight (or even sometimes great) variation on how they picture and describe it.

And what is our relationship with the Divine? The Divine exists beyond the material realm. It exists in the realm of Ideal Forms (Nous), and further in Pure Being (The One) without any distinctions (which precedes any of the distinctions necessary for separate Intelligible Forms to exist).

We participate by being variant manifestations of the universal Ideal Forms we are associated with. For example, we share in the Divinity of intelligence, by participating in it via possession of intelligence and intellectual abilities. These Ideal Forms retain their essence as individual principals, but also end up manifest as multiple variants resulting from possible differences of non-essential features. For example, the Ideal Form of a car remains its own undivided principle. Yet it becomes varied in that there are cars of different colors, sizes, and intended functions. Each variant of a car is a part of the single, undivided Ideal Form of cars, but also possess individuality among all cars via its attributes.

Since the Soul is a collection of the metaphysical properties of an individual, the Soul of an Animated Body too participates in the single, undivided Ideal Form of Souls, but also exists as the individual Animated Body which can be distinguished among all of the Souls of Animated Bodies.

Further, because a Soul has Being (it exists), it also counts as a part of Pure Being (The One). If we take the whole of 'everything', the Soul is included in this singular unified thing. No amount of variation within 'everything' may discount or diminish the concept of 'everything' itself which contains the variations.

It is the Soul which dictates the animation of the material body to form the Animated Body. The Soul does so not by intermixing with the body, but rather by existing as an individual Ideal Form which the body participates in via its physical properties and their motions. Thus, we are variant 'copies' of the various Ideal Forms which make up the aggregate Soul.

The initial forms in which the physical body participates in are those which comprise base level sense perceptions and emotions. As more and more forms aggregate around the Soul, the capabilities of the Animated Body increase, resulting finally in the capabilities of producing children. Though the body produces variant copies of itself materially into new material bodies (i.e. reproduction/childbirth), the Soul produces new variant Ideal forms as chains of rational necessity. Each 'link' in this chain produces further rational necessities in an unending chain. For example, the concept of quantity produces necessarily the various individual quantities (e.g 1,2,3,4...). The various individual quantities necessitate the formation of differing groups of quantities (e.g. odd, even, etc). And so on. Thus, the Soul and The body engage in the same activity (Demiurgy), but at different levels/realms. The body materially, the Soul metaphysically.

### **1.1.9      The Flaws of the Animated Body Cause Evil, Not the Soul**

As discussed earlier from (notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 2), the Soul is outside of the realm of evils (such as fear, pain, death, etc.) which a body is subject to, and which it may subject other bodies to. Consequently, these evils must reside in the aggregate Animated Body.

Yet does it really make sense to say that our Soul is not culpable to the evil acts our body engages in? This would be especially surprising considering two things: a. the Soul is responsible for the final judgement made during any decision. b. the Soul guides the mind from subject to subject during discursive reasoning.

It makes sense if we consider that such evils only occur if the higher parts of our Soul (Intellection and Reason) are disregarded in favor of base level emotions and perceptions, or if we are too hasty in our reasoning and come to the wrong conclusion.

If our base level senses and perceptions cause an initial reaction without involving the powers of the Soul, the Soul is not culpable as it never even had a chance to perceive those base level sensations (let alone to intervene and steer the body in the right direction).

If we are too quick to come to a conclusion, the problem is that our powers of Discursive Reasoning have concluded too quickly without properly deferring to a final judgement. Thus, once again the Soul itself is not culpable, as it had no way of intervening.

Given this insight we can make a clear distinction:

Base level sense perceptions and emotions belong to the Animated Body, information being sensed by the body and reaching the Soul via the points at which the Soul and body are coupled.

Discursive reasoning belongs to the Animated Body, as the body senses things, and the Soul directs reason through these base level perceptions.

Finally, Intellectual reasoning, the true understanding of abstract concepts and the final decision-making power resides in the Soul alone.

Since evils are always the result of base level senses being accepted without reason, or with reasoning that was faulty due to a lack of full understanding, we must conclude that the Soul, which understands, is not culpable in evil.

Evil belongs with the Animated Body alone.

### **1.1.10     Things Which Belong to the Soul and Things Which Belong to the Animated Body**

There is a notable objection to the notion that our Soul is meaningfully distinguishable from the body. When we refer to 'our self', we often refer to the previously defined aggregate Animated Body, which is both body and

Soul. So we say that the 'our self' has passions (by saying that 'I am passionate), and we say that the 'our self' takes various actions (by saying 'I did that'). Namely, we claim for 'our self' the things we have previously in this tractate isolated as separate from ourselves. For example, we refer to 'our pain' (which in theory is only felt by the body, but then transferred to the Soul via a complement).

The source of all of this confusion is that we use terms such as 'I', 'Me', 'Myself' etc. in two different ways to refer to different concepts. *Connotatively*, we refer to 'our self' meaning both the Soul and the body as a matter of convention for everyday life. *Denotatively*, in a more strict philosophically minded way, we refer to 'our self' as meaning the Soul alone.

It is this *denotative* notion of 'our self' as referring to the Soul alone which is technically correct. Our passions and senses only have access to the Soul via the complement with the body, and as such are only applicable to the Soul while it animates a physical body. The true understanding of Ideal Forms is always to be found in the Soul alone, whether directly if detached from a material body, or via Philosophy while coupled with a body. Because the intellectual reasoning (Intellectual Soul) is the only thing which the Soul possesses no matter what, we may call it the human Soul's essence, and correctly refer to this as the ultimate 'our self'.

For example, things which deal with local customs and traditions (and are thus to a degree subjective) belong to the coupled Animated Body.

All vices based on base level sensory perceptions and emotions, such as envy, jealousy, and pity belong to the coupled Animated Body (because that is where such base level emotions and senses have their seat).

Friendship is an interesting case. So far as friendship exists to sate the base level sensory perceptions and emotions (as is the case with envy, jealousy, and pity), it belongs to the Animated Body. Friendship, which is based on a mutual Intellectual understanding, however, belongs to the Soul.

### **1.1.11      The Intellectual Soul and the Self**

In some cases, usually when a human is younger and less wise (and only really concerned with base level sensory perceptions and emotions, i/e the Unreasoning Soul), things like friendship serve the Animated Body. As we age and our minds are able to better contemplate the higher realm of the Soul, we can better engage the higher order principles via the Soul alone. Once we are able to engage in Discursive Reasoning (the Reasoning Soul, and the 'middle' portion of the human Soul), we can start to interact with these higher principles and begin to gain understanding into them.

Given that Intellectual Soul (the understanding of Ideal Forms) belongs to the Soul alone, is it really fair to say that it belongs to 'our self'? We say that the Unreasoning Soul and Reasoning Soul belong to 'our self', but they belong to the coupled Animated Body.

The answer is yes, the Intellectual Soul belongs to 'our self', but only when we are actively engaged in the contemplation of higher principles (i.e. Philosophy). We do so via using Discursive Reasoning, but focusing it on the higher principles which are typical of the Intellectual Soul, as opposed to focusing our Discursive Reasoning

on the lower principles of the Unreasoning Soul. When we are not actively engaged with the higher principles, they only potentially belong to us, the potential only being actualized if we end up engaging with them actively.

What can we say of the less intelligent animals of the world? One idea goes that the Soul of a Human and the Soul of an Animal are the same, but the Soul ended up in an unintelligent animal body due to its sins. As a result, the Soul does not completely couple with their animal bodies, and the Animated Body they become only gains the powers of the Unreasoning Soul and the Reasoning Soul. In particularly unintelligent animals, such as insects, they may only possess the basic powers of the Unreasoning Soul. In extreme cases, the least intelligent only participate in the lowest parts of the Ideal Form of 'animation' (the universal Soul).

### **1.11.12      The Difference Between the Essence of a Soul and the Lower Phases of the Soul**

Above it has been argued (Notes on Ennead One, First Tractate Section 9 and 10) that sins do not belong to the Soul. Yet if that is true, then how do we reconcile that with the belief that the Soul is punished for its sins (whether in Hades, Hell, and/or various reincarnations)?

It has been previously argued that the Soul has different elements (The Unreasoning Soul, The Reasoning Soul, and the Intellectual Soul). We have differentiated these elements from the pure essence of Soul (the ideal form of the individual's Soul). As such, it is possible that sin belongs to the elements of the Soul without belonging to the Soul in its essence.

To clarify, we will discuss how the Soul essence gains additional elements. Initially, the Soul is merely an essence (the Ideal Form of an individual). At what we refer to as the birth of this Soul, the lower phases of the Soul come into being. These lower phases of the Soul are not some form of the essence/ideal form itself, but rather iterative variants congruent with the essence. The lower phases of the Soul are lower ordered entities which participate in the metaphysical properties of the essence/ideal form of the Soul. For example, the ideal form of a car allows individual makes and models of cars to physically exist, and they participate in the 'carness' of the Ideal Form of cars. Just as we cannot blame the ideal form of cars for the consequences related to a defective individual car, we cannot blame the ideal form of human beings for the consequences related to the action of an evil individual human being. For another example, a light cannot be blamed for a shadow. Rather, the object blocking the light source is to blame for the shadow.

When it is said that the Soul descends and declines by appearing in material forms, what is meant is that a material form can only be diluted and incomplete. No individual car can encompass the entirety of 'carness'. Further, the material manifestations of a Soul require the material. When there is no more material left to participate in a Soul, then the material manifestation of the Soul ceases to exist. In such cases, all that is left is the essence, or the ideal form. In such cases, the Soul only exists in the realm of Ideal Forms.

This distinction can be seen metaphorically in Homer's depictions of Hercules. Hercules' material body goes to Hades. Yet Hercules' essence remains in Olympus. Hercules' eternal virtues forever reside in the realm of Ideal Forms, but those parts of Hercules which required a material body are lost and destroyed. And so, part of Hercules is mortal, and part of him remains immortal.

### 1.11.13     What Is It That Thinks?

To conclude, what is it that thinks Intellectually? Is it ‘our self’, or is it our Soul?

The answer is that it is ‘our self’ via the Soul.

Our material body (and its body parts, such as the brain and nervous system) moves in patterns in accordance with the ideal form an Animated Body. These movements (such as the electrical movements in our brain) allow our body to engage in Intellectual though.

Does this mean that our Soul must have material which is moving to think? No, rather, its essence is within the realm of pure Intellectual reason. It ‘thinks’ via the ‘movements’ of causal chains of reasoning.

And so ‘our self’ engage in Intellectual thought in two distinct ways. One, by thinking Intellectually. That is to say, by being capable of acts of intellectual reasoning. Two, by participating in the Ideal Form of Intellectual reasoning itself.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Second Tractate - On Virtue

### **1.2.1      The Relationship Between Human Virtues and the Divine**

According to Plato, the natural goal of Man is to escape from the material realm. This is for two reasons.

1. Evil permeates and dominates the material realm.
2. The natural inclination of the Soul is to retreat from evil.

Given that the material realm is dominated by evil, and given that the nature of the Soul is to avoid and escape evil, it is thus the natural tendency of the Soul to attempt to escape from the material realm itself.

How is this escape achieved? According to Plato, we escape by living in harmony with the Divine (thus creating a harmonic resonance between us and the Divine). Primarily, this entails behaving and thinking in accordance with virtue.

While this is a conventional opinion, it raises several questions.

- Does the Divine itself possess virtue?
- What is 'the Divine'?

When we think of the Divine, we tend to think of it as the thing which possesses the highest order principles of virtue, which possesses the most wisdom, and which is responsible for the acts of creation (i.e. the World-Soul or the Demiurge).

Does virtue reside within the Divine? Let us consider the classic human and civic virtues, such as courage and moderation. The divine cannot be harmed, as it is eternal. So could it really possess courage? Courage in the face of what threat? As for moderation, the Divine has no needs. So what could tempt it? We run into the same logical problems in asserting that the Divine possesses virtues as we did when investigating whether or not base level sense perceptions and emotions have their seat in the Ideal Form of the Soul (from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 2).

Clearly the human (and Civic) virtues do not apply to the Divine. Prudence implies a victory over the irrational human tendencies, tendencies which the Divine surely does not have. Thus, Prudence does not apply to the Divine. Self-control implies a victory over the rash emotional human tendencies, tendencies which the Divine does not have. Thus, self-control does not apply to the Divine. Righteousness implies a victory of moral acts over all manner of immoral acts, immoral acts which offer no temptation to the Divine. Thus, even Righteousness itself does not apply to the Divine.

Since the human and civic virtues have no application to the Divine, a human being cannot engage in human and civic virtues to become in harmony with the Divine.

Merely engaging in human and civic virtues is insufficient to create a harmonic resonance with the divine.

If the human and civic virtues are insufficient for complete harmonization with the divine, then higher order virtue of the Soul must be realized for a true harmonic resonance to be achieved.

Yet just because human and civic virtues do not entirely harmonize us with the divine, it does not mean that they are of no use in that endeavor. Even though human and civic virtues have no commensurability with the Divine, a human who succeeds in upholding them will be more similar to the divine than a human who does not. Such human and civic virtues do not bring the Divine closer to the virtuous human, but rather they bring the virtuous

human closer to the Divine. For an analogous example, a human standing next to a fire does not cause the fire to become warmer, however the human being will become warmer, and thus the similarity (and consequently, the harmony) between the human and the fire is increased.

This analogy brings to light the relationship between the experiences of the material realm (base level sensory perceptions to the human) and the higher ordered Ideal Forms which are prior to the material variant manifestations of them. For example, an individual material house is different from the Ideal Form of 'houses'. The material house has attributes specific to the material realm which do not exist in the realm of Ideal Forms. A material house has specific length dimensions; however the Ideal Form of a house is not of any particular size. A material house is built in a specific, shape, however the Ideal Form of a house is not in any particular shape. This is true for all of the physical attributes of a house.

This leads us to a peculiar situation. While the Ideal House has no particular physical attributes, it is precisely the particular physical attributes of a material house whose combination causes the material object to resemble the Ideal Form of 'houses'.

In this way, although the Divine does not possess human or civic virtues, a human may resemble the divine by possessing the right combination of human and civic virtues.

### **1.2.2 How a Human Can Resemble the Divine**

It is necessary to further examine the human virtues more closely. Via the human virtues, we can become closer to being in harmonic resonance with the Divine. Particularly, we must examine how virtue exists in a human being, and how virtue exists as an archetype in the realm of Ideal Forms.

There are two possible reasons why things can resemble one another:

- a. Things can resemble each other because they both share a primordial principle.
- b. Things can resemble each other because one of them is a principle and the other thing shares in that principle.

In case a., the two things share a similar nature in that they are both things participating in something primordial. For example, two objects might be the same color (e.g. blue). They share a fundamental aspect of their nature in that they are both objects which are participating in the same higher order principle. Their similarity is that they both are colored blue (i.e. they both participate in 'blueness').

In case b., the two things do not share a similar nature. One is a higher order principle, and their other is an object participating in that principle. For example, one might be a particular color (e.g. red) and another is an object participating in that color (i.e. a red object). In this case, the red object is participating in 'redness,' however the principle 'redness' is *not* also participating in 'redness'. Their similarity is in that the object resembles the principle.

In one case you have things which are similar because they all resemble a principle. In the other case, you have things which are similar because one of them is an object which resembles a principle, and the other is the principle itself. The Divine is the realm of the higher order principles. Since a human is an object which participates in various principles, a virtuous human resembles the Divine via possibility b.

A virtuous human becomes in harmony with the divine by participating in the higher order principles of virtue.

To clarify, let us consider human virtue more closely.

Each humanly virtuous action is a particular instance of acting virtuously. In this way, the human and civic virtues imprint onto a human being in the same way a shape is imprinted to a material object when it is molded, carved, or cast into that shape (e.g. as the conceptual/geometric shape of 'axes' is imprinted onto a piece of metal when it is forged into an axe head). The material thing, be it an axe head or a human action, is one possible variant of the higher order principle. Consequently, a virtuous human can resemble the Divine in the same way that a particular axe can resemble the Ideal Form of 'axes'. In turn, a human being which is not engaged with higher order principles has no resemblance to the Divine, just how an unformed piece of matter does not resemble any particular shape or category of object. The more virtuous a human being, the more that human is in harmonic resonance with the Divine via this resemblance.

The human and civic virtues are the *acts and mindsets* which harmonize a human being with the Divine. The civic and human virtues *are not* aspects of the Divine itself.

The confusion (as discussed in notes on Ennead One, Second Tractates section 1) was to mistake the human resemblance to the divine as being a variety of resemblance possibility a. (i.e. two things sharing participation in a higher order principle), when in actuality it is a variety of resemblance possibility b.

### **1.2.3 Human Virtue as Separation From the Passions of the Body**

Plato makes a distinction between human and civic virtues and higher order virtues. He says that ascent to Divinity entails a flight away from the material world and its ways (including civic virtues and humanity-centric values). He qualifies civic and human virtues as 'homely'. Plato describes all virtues as processes of purification. Yet also, he asserts that the higher order virtues are needed for a human to achieve harmonic resonance and ultimately assimilation with Divinity.

How do virtues purify? How does purification bring a human being closer to divinity?

As is discussed elsewhere (notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 9), evil belongs to the body. As a result, when the Soul mingles with the body (as is the case in the process of the Soul animating a body), it shares in the evils of the body. In turn, the Soul may become improved by disengaging from apatite and desires of the body, and instead by engaging with its true nature, which is to engage in acts of Intellection.

And so, the virtue Prudence involves not blindly following the whims of the body, the virtue Temperance involves divorcing oneself from the passions of the body, the virtue Courage involves doing away with the fear of separation from the body, and the virtue Justice involves allowing reason and intelligence (i.e. acts of Intellection) to be the basis for decisions.

A human being may become in harmony with the Divine by mirroring its nature. The Ideal Forms are eternal, and impervious to the events of the material world. The Divine provides the framework for things within the material world without being affected by them in return. Consequently, a virtuous human acts not as a result the events of the material world (e.g. not based on the passions of the body), but acts in accordance with the wisdom of the Divine.

In spite of the fact that a man may become virtuous by imitation of the Divine, it is not the case that Divine itself possesses virtue. A human may possess a virtuous character as they engage in virtuous actions. The properties of the Divine are of an entirely different quality than that which exists in a human. Divine wisdoms are the Intelligible principles themselves, whereas human being may only engage particular instances. For example, the concept of Justice itself is Divine, however a human being may only engage in particular acts of Justice (such as choosing to do the right thing instead of succumbing to bodily temptations). The Divine principle itself is the essence, and encapsulates all possible manifestations of the principle. In that sense, the divine is ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’. Particular human actions are only one of an infinite number of manifestations of the principle. Human actions are only one of an infinite number of possibilities, so they are ‘imperfect’ or ‘incomplete’. Souls may be virtuous by acting in congruence with the Divine, but the Divine has no ways of acting or being in various states such that it is logically incompatible with the concept of virtue.

Since the Divine does not possess flaws or potential vulnerabilities, and since virtues are a process by which something can overcome the distractions caused by flaws and potential vulnerabilities, the Divine cannot engage in virtue or possess a virtuous character.

The Divine lacks the necessary flaws and vulnerabilities which are prerequisite for virtues.

#### **1.2.4            Human Virtues and Virtue of the Soul**

How does this process of purification relate to the higher ordered virtue of the Soul?

There are two logically possible ways virtue of the Soul could relate to the concept of purification:

- i. Virtue could be the *process* of purification.
- ii. Virtue could be the *consequent result* of a process of purification.

Is a virtuous person someone who is engaged in the process of purification, or is it someone who has already purified themselves?

Something already purified is superior to the process of purification. This is because something purified has already had its negative attributes removed, whereas something in the process of purification still possesses negative attributes.

Is something merely having its negative attributes removed sufficient for it to be Good? No, the lack of something negative does not imply the possession of something positive. For example, someone does not become wealthy once they have repaid their debts. In addition, they would need to accumulate wealth.

Souls begin without any accumulated evil, but ultimately fall into evil acts. Something good would not commit evil acts. Since Souls begin without any accumulated evil, and since Souls fall into evil acts which are incongruent with being good, a mere lack of accumulated evil (whether it be initially pure, or post-purification) is insufficient for goodness.

With regards to the Soul, a Soul without evil is not necessarily good.

Since a Soul can be good or evil, it must participate in the Ideal Forms of both good and evil. A Soul may participate in Good via using its Intellectual abilities to resonate with the realm of the Divine. A Soul may participate in Evil via forsaking harmonization with the Divine in favor of prioritizing the passions, desires, and appetites of the material body.

Virtues purify the Soul by shifting focus away from the passions, desires, and appetites of the body to the wisdom of the Divine realm of Ideal Form. The end result of this process is to be in complete harmonic resonance with the Divine, and having no concern for the passions, desires, and appetites of the body. This state of harmonic resonance with the divine is the property of the Soul.

So we now have our distinction between the virtues of the Human and Soul:

- Human and civic virtues are the *processes of purification* a human may participate in.
- The higher order virtue of the Soul is a *state of having already been purified*, the result of which is to be in perfect harmonic resonance with the Divine.

What can we say about the Soul which has reached this harmonic resonance?

Souls never possess the Ideal Forms completely, rather they only ever possess variant manifestations of them. For example, a Soul may possess a body of a particular color or shape, but it never possesses the Ideal Form of 'color' or 'shape'. A Soul's ignorance of its possessed variant manifestations does not mean that it does not possess them, and it does not mean that it does not participate in the relevant Ideal Form either. Through acts of Intellection, a Soul is able to relate its possessions (i.e. attributes) to the Ideal Forms they participate in. For example, a Soul may realize that it participates in Courage by relating the Ideal Form of 'Courage' with specific courageous acts it has engaged in. Better yet, it may relate *potential* actions to the Ideal Form of 'Courage' before making any relevant decisions. In other words, a truly Courageous man will only engage in acts that it has already discerned to be Courageous.

True virtue of the Soul, true harmonic resonance with the divine is thus a Soul which engages in the human virtues, achieves purity from evil, and finally is able to Intellectually relate its virtuous attributes to the Ideal Form of virtue itself.

A Soul may participate in all of the Ideal Forms, and yet may *not* have made any Intellectual acts of relating its possessed manifest variants of the Ideal forms back with the Ideal Forms themselves. In this way, the process of gaining knowledge is merely the realization of things as they actually are (and already were). If we have not yet made the relations, we are unaware of the truth.

#### **1.2.5      The Limits of Purification**

We have established that to be in harmony with the Divine, we must purify ourselves by cutting ties without material and bodily passions, desires, and appetites. What is the limit of this purification process for a human being?

The answer to this lies in a distinction between that which is necessary and that which is decadent. If injured a person will necessarily feel a degree of pain, but the virtuous person will not wallow in it unnecessarily. Eating is necessary, and eating brings about pleasure, but a virtuous person will not seek out food for the sake of its pleasure alone. In a dangerous situation, a person will be afraid, but a virtuous person will not allow their fear to become incommensurate with the threat, nor focus on the feeling more than is necessary to avoid the danger. If wronged, a person will feel angry, but a virtuous person will not allow this anger to influence their decisions. For the same reasons that a Soul itself has no need for base level emotions/passions, desires, and appetites (from notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 2), a purified human is above such vanities.

Since a human being is a Soul animating a body (i.e. an Animated Body), and since a body will have passions, desires, and appetites, and since a virtuous human being has purified themselves by detaching as much as is possible from the passions, desires, and appetites of the body, then a virtuous person will engage with the passions, appetites, and desires of the body only as much as is necessary,

A virtuous (i.e. purified) person only engages with passions, appetites, and desires to the degree which is necessary for the basics of survival and good health.

Above all else, a purified person resists the unconscious urges of the body. It seeks to examine intellectually each passion, desire, and appetite, and chooses only to act in ways which are wise and beneficial. The more purified a person, the more naturally this process will occur. To a truly virtuous person, the mere understanding of something being the proper course of action is sufficient to overcome any contrary passions, desires, and appetites.

#### **1.2.6            The Positive and Negative Requirements for Divinity**

A purified human being ceases to 'sin' (i.e. fall victim to the whims of the passions, desires, and appetite of the body), however this is not the ultimate goal. The lack of a negative does not necessitate the possession of a positive. The ultimate goal of a human being is to reach the Divine. Thus, a person who is merely purified has not reached the Divine.

A human being who is engaged with the Divine, but still struggles with the passions, desires, and appetite of the body can be thought of as semi-divine (i.e. a Demigod). In this case, the person possesses a sort of double nature, partly Divine, partly impure. Thus, a person who merely engages with the Divine without overcoming their earthly passions, desires, and appetites has not fully reached the Divine.

To cease engaging the passions, desires, and appetites of the body is required for purification, but is insufficient to reach the Divine. To reflect on one's actions and consciously relate thoughts to the higher order Ideal Forms is to engage the divine, but is insufficient to harmonize with the Divine fully. Thus, it is necessary to both be purified of the earthly passions, desires, and appetites AND to actively engage the Divine via intellectual contemplation to fully be in harmony with the Divine. This is the limit of what is possible for a mere human being.

Only a person who is both purified and engaged in contemplative intellectual reflection of all things has reached the Divine (as much as is possible for a human Animated Body).

For a maximally Divine human, the virtues merge. Their wisdom consists in both a relational understanding of the Ideal Forms and Intellectual essences, but also in an Intuitive understanding of the Principle of Intellection itself.

Once again, we find that this Wisdom takes two forms. There are the virtues of wisdom, which belong to the Soul itself in the form of the wise actions a wise person engages in (i.e. the various specific manifestations of Wisdom). Then there is the pure non-specific Intellectual concept of 'Wisdom' itself. The actions participate in Wisdom, but are not the Principle itself. The Principle of Wisdom itself is non-specific, and encompasses all possible Wise actions (i.e. it is the essence of Wisdom). As a result, a truly wise person must both engage in Wise actions, but also must have an Intellectual understanding of Wisdom as a Principle.

This distinction also allows us to distinguish the higher order virtues of the Soul from the lower order human virtues. The lower order virtues are individual, specific virtuous acts. They contain the essence of the higher order principle, but do not exhaustively cover all the higher order principle's possible variations. The higher order virtues are the essences of each virtue itself, which encompasses all possible manifesting variations of it. So, a lower order virtue might be to engage in Courage via putting oneself in harms way to defend another. The higher order virtue would be the essence of Courage itself, which is non-specific and encompasses all possible courageous actions.

The relationship between the human virtues and the Soul mirrors the relationship between the Virtues of the Soul and Intellection (Nous). The human being is within the material realm, one step removed from the simpler, higher order realm of the Soul. Human virtues purify a human being by focusing their attention to the Soul and away from the concerns of the material body. The Soul is in turn one step removed from the simpler, higher order realm of Nous/Intellection. Thus, the virtues of the Soul purify the Soul by focusing its attention away from the realm of Souls and towards the realm of pure Intellect/Nous.

### **1.2.7            Virtues of the Soul Purify the Soul**

For every human and civic virtue, there is a corollary virtue of the Soul. For a human, the virtues are specific acts. An example of Human Intelligence might be an instance of a human being making a particular decision and relying on Wisdom over unexamined instinct. For the Soul, Intelligence is the essence of the principle of wise thought. An example of human Temperance might be to suppress a particular bodily urge. For the Soul, Temperance is the essence of the principle of focusing on oneself over external stimuli. An example of human Justice might be a person fulfilling a specific obligation they have to someone else. For the Soul, Justice is the essence of the principle of doing the right thing. An example of human Courage may be a person not regarding their bodily self in a particular dangerous situation. For the Soul, Courage is the essence of the principle of impassiveness to the material. An example of human Prudence might be to examine one's options carefully before making a specific decision. For the Soul, Prudence is the essence of the principle of avoiding irrationality. The Soul is not these essential principles (e.g. Ideal Forms) itself, but rather the Soul *contemplates* these principles.

Human virtues purify a human, and in the same manner virtues of the Soul purify the Soul. Since virtues purify, and since within each realm, purification involves a reduction to the realm with is simpler (e.g. less specific), earlier, and more primordial, we must conclude that the simpler and less specific something is, the closer it is to being purely good (i.e. perfect). Since the earlier things go (i.e. the simpler, less distinct things become), the better

they become, it must be the case that the earliest thing must be the most good. Since the earliest (i.e. least distinct) thing is purely good, we must conclude that goodness is essential.

The good which is the result of purification via virtues is not in fact produced by this virtue, but rather was always present and merely tarnished by the presence of impurities.

Since the higher order virtues are less specific than the lower order virtues, it is the case that the higher order virtues encompass all of their lower order counterparts. The Soul-level virtue of Intelligence encompasses all possible individual acts of the human-level virtue of Intelligence. The human level virtues are distinct, and only encompass a small portion of the higher order virtue which they participate in.

Given this, what can we say of the Virtuous Human being (i.e. the Sage)? Is it possible for them to possess both the higher order and lower order virtues? Must the virtues be actualized, or may they only exist as potential? What can we say when the domain of one virtue overlaps with another, and examining a decision through the lens of each virtue seems to allow for differing virtuous actions?

In order to rid themselves of the harmful aspects of the material realm, a virtuous man will engage in the human virtues via specific virtuous actions. This is necessary for negative virtue (i.e to be free from 'sin'). In order to elevate themselves to the Divine, a virtuous man will contemplate the essence of the principles of the Divine itself. To do so is necessary for positive virtue (i.e. to attain harmony with the Divine). Thus, for each virtue, a truly virtuous Sage will be unsatisfied with merely limiting the effects of harmful aspects of the material realm. In contemplating the essences of the virtues themselves, the true Sage will ultimately seek to understand them intuitively, and thus assimilate harmoniously with the Divine itself. In doing so the Sage knows the relationships between the virtues, and can correctly navigate their interactions.

The true Sage is purified from sin, and in harmony with all of the principles of the Divine. As a result, the Virtuous Sage becomes capable of acting appropriately consistently.

## Notes on Plotinus – Ennead One, Third Tractate – Dialectics, The Pathway to Ascension

### 1.3.1      **The Process of Ascension to the Divine and the Path of the Artist**

In Ennead One, Second tractate, it was concluded that the 'most good' is the earliest, uncorrupted, pure, first principle (from notes on Ennead One, Second Tractate, section 7). Plato referred to this primordial Divine principle as 'The Good'.

What method can be used to bring us into harmony with this most primordial Divine principle?

Plato's position is that this process can take multiple lifetimes. For Souls who are within their first incarnation, those who become Philosophers (i.e. those who instinctively pursue wisdom), Artists, and those inclined to Love are most suitable for ascension to the Divine. Typically, those on their first (or perhaps second or third) incarnation can at best hope to make their initial contact with the Divine. Such an initial contact with the Divine serves to provide a foothold for future incarnations and future steps on the path of total and ultimate ascension.

There are also Souls who have made initial contact with the Divine, or perhaps even multiple contacts. These experiences come with Wisdom, and pave the way for the final push to ascension.

Given that this process takes lifetimes, the goals within a particular lifetime may vary. As discussed above, there are generally two phases of this process:

- i.    Initial contact with the Divine.
- ii.   Convergence with the Divine after initial contact has been made.

Since it is the first step on this journey, we must begin with the process of Initial contact with the Divine. To do so, we will consider the three types of people (mentioned earlier) most suitable:

- a.   The Philosopher
- b.   The Artist
- c.   The Lover

The Artist is naturally moved by the beautiful. They are drawn to it ecstatically. Yet their understanding of beauty is not Intellectual. They rely on their sensory perceptions, impressions made upon them by things external to themselves. When an Artist hears a harmonious melody, or sees an aesthetically pleasing work, they are instinctively inclined towards it. When they hear discord, or see something ugly, they are instinctively repulsed. Thus, for the Artist, this instinctive tendency is the starting point in their journey. Through their natural attraction to beauty and revulsion to the hideous, they may come to know the Divine Intelligible Principles and Ideal Forms instinctively. Such an instinctive understanding of the Divine serves as the Artists initial contact with the Divine. These instincts must then be grounded in the logical framework of Philosophy, otherwise an Artist might not intellectually recognize the truths they have come to know instinctively. This logical framework will be presented later on.

### **1.3.2      The Path of the Lover**

The born Lover is distinguished as arriving in the world already in some harmony with Divine beauty. The Artists may reach this position as well by attaining harmony with Divine beauty. Further, both the Lover and the Artist are capable of advancing along the path to Ascension even further. The Divine beauty which the Lover possesses is not fully realized at first. This is because, although the Lover possesses it, they have not yet comprehended this fact Intellectually. This is similar to the way in which the Artist is able to instinctually recognize Divine beauty, but does not automatically comprehend it Intellectually.

Possessing some Divine beauty intrinsically, the Lover naturally finds themselves drawn to other things which possess Divine beauty. An unfortunate side affect of this is that the Lover is prone to falling into the trap of obsessing over one single Divinely beautiful thing and focusing on it exclusively. To counteract this trap, the Lover must learn to love all things which possess Divine beauty, not just one. Through experiences with a wide array of Divinely beautiful bodies, the Lover may come to distill the essence (i.e. the Ideal Form of Divine Beauty) which they all participate in. An understanding of the essence of Divine beauty servers as the Artist's initial contact with the Divine. The arts, sciences, and virtues all participate in the metaphysical principle of Beauty. After distilling the essence of Divine beauty from especially beautiful things, the Lover may then begin to understand the Divine beauty present in everything. By possessing a portion of Divine beauty themselves, and by attaining an understanding of the Divine beauty present in all things, the Lover is prepared to advance along their journey further.

### **1.3.3      The Path of the Philosopher**

The natural born Philosopher is the most predisposed to Ascension among the various archetypes of human beings. Being born with momentum already in the direction of the Divine, the Philosopher is naturally suspicious of the primacy of base level sensory perceptions and emotions.

The primary issue a Philosopher struggles with is the identification of the correct path to Ascension. While the trappings of the psycho-physical do not particularly tempt the Philosopher, the virtuous alternatives to chasing after the passions of the body are not immediately obvious. Ideally, a Philosopher will seek and find a mentor who can show them the road to follow.

How should a mentor guide the natural born Philosopher?

First a Philosopher must learn mathematics and logic. The study of mathematics and logic illuminates the impact and realness of metaphysical truths. Once the Philosopher has a firm grasp of the nature of things metaphysical (i.e. incorporeal), they have made thir initial contact with the Divine and are ready to hone the method of Dialectics.

### **1.3.4      The Dialectic Method**

Ultimately, whether it is the Artist, the Lover, or the Philosopher, the method of Dialectics is the final piece of the puzzle on the path to Ascension. Each type may come into contact with the Divine via their natural talents (i.e by intuitive understanding of the Divine, distilling the essences of the Divine experientially, or deducing the concepts

of the Divine via metaphysics respectively). Once someone has reached the initial thresholds of the Divine, their grasp on it must be strengthened via Dialectics.

### What is Dialectics?

It is determining the defining properties of something, determining how that thing may be differentiated from other things, determining the Ideal Forms it participates in, and determining whether that thing is a principle (i.e. a Real Being) or an attribute (i.e. non-being). It is determining how many principles there are, and determining which principles are necessarily earlier than others (i.e. determining the ontological hierarchy and order of emanation among things). It is determining how Good (i.e. earlier and simple) or Evil (i.e later and complicated) things are. It is determining which things are eternal, and which things are impermanent. In short, it is the method of identifying the proper place of things Intellectually (i.e. within Nous).

Dialectics makes such determinations rationally and logically. Opinions, sensory perceptions, and emotional impulses have no place in Dialectics. Dialectics is concerned only with things on an Intellectual level. Using pure logic and reason, Dialectics save us from false conclusions erroneously based on appearances and emotions.

In Dialectics, principles are logically expanded into their various potential manifestations. From the multitude of possible manifestations of principles, the essence of the principle itself may be deduced. By determining the unifying characteristics, Dialectics allows the practitioner to arrive at the most universal, least distinct essences of all things.

Having rigorously engaged in Dialectics, the Sage obtains a true and pure understanding of the relationships of all things. They will come to understand which things are essential, which things are truly primordial, and conversely which things are merely byproducts, incomplete portions of a larger concept. By understanding that which is more essential (and closer to The Good) and that which is most distinct and superfluous (and thus closer to Evil), the Dialectic method grants the portioner the ability to pursue the Good, and thus progress towards ascension to the Divine.

#### **1.3.5      Dialectics as a Higher Level of Philosophy**

Since Dialectics is the study and systematic placement of the Ideal forms and Divine principles, one must first grasp the Ideal Forms and Divine principles themselves before engaging in Dialectics. This is achieved first through refining the abilities of the Intellectual Soul (see notes on Ennead One, First Tractate). Once one has gained the ability to interact with the Ideal Forms and Divine principles, one may then begin discerning their qualities and relationships with one another.

By engaging in Dialectics, its practitioner combines and divides the Divine principles until they have attained a perfect understanding of the principle of Intellection itself. Since Dialectics is the process of understanding Intellection itself, Plato writes that Dialectics is the highest application of Intelligence and Wisdom. Since Dialectics is the highest application of Intelligence and Wisdom, it must itself deal with the highest form of Intellectual objects, namely the essences and Ideal Forms themselves.

The aim of Dialectics is to arrive at the highest first principle, variously named the One, The Good, and the Absolute. Since the One is completely unified, with not discernable parts, it is beyond distinction (i.e. beyond being or pure being). Philosophy, as the pursuit of Wisdom, is the study of things which exist (i.e. of the things which are distinct). Dialectics, as the pursuit of The One, is thus the study of that which is beyond being (or pure being).

Given the above distinction, is it correct to place Dialectics within Philosophy? How can we say that Philosophy is the path to The One, if we also say that Dialectics is the path to the One?

Dialectics is indeed within Philosophy. It is distinct within Philosophy as the highest level, and the last phase in the process of ascension. As a result, it is true that both Philosophy and Dialectics lead to the One without any contradiction.

Such confusions arise from the study of Aristotle (who thought of Dialectics as merely one of many possible tools available to a Philosopher) and Epicurus (who thought of Dialectics as largely an exercise in semantics and arbitrary system-building).

Dialectics is the study of things as they are in essence. It is only through errors in reasoning that novices engaged with Dialectics end up in traps of sophistry and illogical conclusion. Opinions, terminology, and semantics are themselves alien to Dialectics. Dialectics merely considered the concepts at hand, and has no use for debates about appearances and inconsequential differences in ways to reference things. Dialectics is concerned with the truth, and so a practitioner skilled in Dialectics is aware of the variety of possible errors in judgement. Dialectics is not concerned with specific arguments, but because good arguments are congruent with the truth, a practitioner skilled in Dialectics can discern a good argument when presented. Dialectics understands the motions of the Soul, namely how base level sense perceptions and emotions (i.e. the Unreasoning Soul) can produce content for processing via discursive reasoning (i.e. the Reasoning Soul), and how the process of directed discursive reasoning can allow the highest levels of the Soul to arrive at true Intellectual Wisdom (i.e. the Intellectual Soul). Yet while Dialectics deals with the various methods used to ascertain the truth, the details of individual components of thought belong to other branches of Philosophy.

### **1.3.6 Dialectics as the Ultimate Phase of all Branches of Philosophy**

As mentioned above, there are many branches of philosophy. For example, the branch of Philosophy which studies nature is known as Natural Philosophy or Physics, and the branch of Philosophy which studies Morality is Moral Philosophy or Ethics. In all cases, Dialectics represents the ultimate phase within a particular course of study.

In Natural Philosophy, nature is observed and experiments are conducted. Ultimately, the findings of such studies are related to the higher order Intellectual concepts, Ideal Forms, and essences. Concepts like Density, Hardness, Mass, Velocity, etc are the higher order principles being studied in their more narrow specific forms (e.g. the study of the specific mass of a certain object, being used to study that object's relationship to other objects via their shared but varied participation in Mass, Density, etc.). The relationship between Natural Philosophy and Dialectics mirrors that of other practices (e.g. engineering, art, etc) and arithmetic. Namely,

Dialectics is a discipline and skill which can be applied to solve problems and ultimately achieve whatever goal is being aimed for.

The same is true of Moral Philosophy. Even for the Human virtues, Dialectics provides principles (e.g. Courage, Temperance, etc.) whose essence allows us to study various specific human actions and passions. The relationship to Dialectics and Moral Philosophy increases as studies ascend to the higher order Divine virtues. Dialectics and the Divine virtues both primarily take place in the realm of Ideal Forms and essences. In such cases, the Principles of virtue themselves are studied, stripped of any particularization.

Whatever the course of study may be, Dialectics is the ultimate phase, where the particulars of the study are ultimately related to the higher order Ideal Forms and essences.

Of course, some level of knowledge is possible without use of Dialectics. However, any knowledge derived from any course of study will be imperfect if Dialectics are not employed. In Natural Philosophy, knowing that a particular object is difficult to move around is certainly useful. Yet relating this phenomena to the concept of Mass is the only way this difficulty in movement can be related to the difficulty in moving other objects (and further, their relative levels of difficulty). For Moral Philosophy, knowing that a particular action was good or bad can be useful, yet only by relating a particularly good or bad action to the virtue it represents (or betrays) can we gain insight into the potential good or bad of some other action.

Eventually, knowledge of the essence or Principle itself renders particular knowledge of a specific situation obsolete. By understanding Mass, one can predict how difficult any object might be to move (even if they have no experience trying to move it). By understanding the essence of a Moral Virtue, one can predict the good or bad of their actions (and the actions of others) before the act is complete and its consequences manifest.

Thus, the natural order of study begins with the particulars of any given situation. From there, the essences of the higher order principles can be derived. Only the person who has accurately derived the essences of the higher order principles has attained the level of the wise Sage.

### Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Fourth Tractate - On Happiness

#### **1.4.1      The Aristotelian Concept of Happiness as Living Well**

Can non-human animals be Happy? To answer such a question, we must first understand what it means to be Happy.

To Aristotle, happiness and living well are more or less synonymous. Given this, we can consider several different notions of what it means to live well.

1. To the Epicureans/Hedonists, living well consists in pleasant and pleasurable sensations.
2. To the Stoics, living well consists in accomplishing one's natural function (i.e. Arete).

Non-human animals can enjoy pleasant and pleasurable sensations. Non-human animals can also achieve their natural functions. If it is true that to enjoy pleasant sensations and to achieve personal goals is to live well, and if to live well is to be Happy, then we can conclude that non-human animals can be Happy.

If living well consists in pleasant and pleasurable sensations and achieving one's natural functions, then non-human animals may live well.

There are some who would object to the notion that non-human animals can be happy by merely living well. For one, such a simple set of conditions for happiness even permits plant life to be happy. After all, plants live and have their natural functions of growth, bearing fruit and flowers, producing seeds, etc.

While human beings view themselves as superior to the rest of the living world, this alone is not an argument against other life forms being capable of Happiness. It is not even an argument at all. Some might argue that happiness presents itself as an emotion. Since plants are not capable of emotions, they would argue that plants are not capable of Happiness.

Yet we need not ascribe the traits of human beings to plants to allow them to live well. Plants have varied wellbeing. Plants can relatively speaking be healthy or unhealthy, in a good environment or in a bad environment, be damaged or undamaged, etc. Thus, plants can clearly live well (or poorly).

Some may hold that actively feeling pleasure and pleasant sensations (i.e. Aristippus' Hedonism) is sufficient for living well. Others may hold that merely being free from unpleasant experiences (i.e. Epicurus' Ataraxy) is sufficient for living well. Others may hold that achieving one's goals (i.e. Stoicism) is sufficient for living well. In any case, non-human life forms of all types are clearly capable of living well.

If to live well is to be Happy, then we must conclude that non-human life forms can be happy.

#### **1.4.2      Which Living Beings Can Live Well?**

Some may argue that plants are not capable of living well due to their lack of recognizable sense perceptions. If a plant cannot sense that it is living well, can it be said to live well?

The term sensation means a self-knowledge of one's state. For someone to be able to know that they are in a particular state, they must be in a particular state to begin with. Otherwise, what would the self-knowledge be about? Since the state of a living thing exists independent of the sensation of it, then the fact of whether or not it is living well is not dependent on the sensation.

Since the fact of the matter regarding whether or some living thing is in a state of living well is not dependent on its perception that it is, a plant may live will in spite of its lack of a recognizable experience of sense perception.

Living well is the possession of a Good life. Since living well is a Good thing, it follows that living well contains Goodness. Put another way the state of living well participates in Goodness or The Good.

Some may object that having a Good life is not dependent on the state that one is in, but rather is precisely the experience of being in a Good state (more or less the inverse of the argument above). This cannot be the case. Such a definition of a Good life would allow for someone who was in dire peril to be considered to have a Good life as long they experienced that they were living well (due to some hallucination, delusion, or insanity).

Another possibility is that one must both be in a state that is congruent with living well, and also sense that they are in this state to have a Good life. Yet if being in a state of living well is not itself a Good life, and if knowing that one is living well is not itself a Good life, then these things themselves are not participating in Goodness, and are themselves Neutral. An explanation must then be given for how two inherently Neutral things can combine to become something Good.

What is a response to this requirement for intrinsic Goodness in possessing a Good life? It could be that a living being must both be in a state that is congruent with living well, and also be Intellectually self-aware of the fact that they are participating in Goodness. If living well requires one to Intellectually know that they are participating in Goodness, it requires a faculty which is capable of considering the higher order realm of Ideal Forms and Essences. As a result, it would be insufficient to merely experience pleasure (e.g. the experiences of the Unreasoning Soul), and instead requires the capabilities of higher reasoning (i.e. the Intellectual Soul) to make the connection the higher order realm of Ideal Forms (see notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1). Further, since this Intellectual judgement is of a higher order than the materially based sensory perceptions of the body, this implies a higher order instance of living well than is purely physical. The relationship is similar to the relationship between Human level virtues and virtues of the Soul (see notes on Ennead One, Second Tractate, Section 4). Such a state of living well must be experienced by someone who is aware on an Intellectual level that they are living well, as opposed to merely experiencing the bodily pleasures associated with living well in the material realm. Again, the difference is similar to someone who merely experiences the consequences of engaging in virtuous behaviors in their human existence, as opposed to the Sage who knows Intellectually that they are participating in the essence of said virtues (see notes on Ennead One, Second Tractate, Section 7).

The trend is that the higher order Intellectual instances of things (be they virtues, living well, experiences of the soul, etc.) are superior to their human and material counterparts, and the proper goal of the wise. Even so, the claim that happiness is exclusive to those who can experience it Intellectually requires a proper argument.

There are two potential reasons to elevate the Intellectual experience of living well.

- i. Engaging in living well Intellectually is the most effective and efficient way to achieve the goal of living well.
- ii. Engaging in living well Intellectually is valuable in of itself. Its value is more than as a means to an end.

Considering i., if living well Intellectually is worthwhile only because it makes the process easier, then animals which do not possess Intellectual reasoning abilities (i.e. the Intellectual Soul) may well live well, only with more difficulty.

Considering ii., If engaging in living well Intellectually is valuable in of itself, we raise several additional questions.

What is the inherent value in engaging in living well Intellectually is valuable in of itself? What purpose does such engagement serve?

Living well cannot merely be for the purposes of fulfilling the desires and passions of the body, otherwise it would not be deserving of its distinction as valuable on a higher order level. Clearly a Good life is not required to simply stay alive or engage in the mundane activities of material existence.

To answer all of these questions, we must come up with a superior definition of Happiness.

#### **1.4.3        Happiness as Fullness, Fullness as Goodness**

What could another conception of Happiness be?

If we argue that Happiness has its seat in the Animated Body (e.g. the Animal, the Living Being), then we must necessarily conclude that all living things are capable of Happiness.

All living things contain an Animated Body. If Happiness has its seat in the Animated Body, all living things would be capable of Happiness due to them having all of the necessary prerequisites (i.e. an Animated Body).

If happiness has its seat in the Animated Body, it cannot be denied to any particular forms of life.

Now, most would argue that only certain types of life are capable of Happiness. Namely, creatures capable of reasoning. This solution has the often unnoticed implication that Happiness is not an attribute of life. If we argue that Happiness only belongs to Rational Beings, when we must limit Happiness to the category of things which is Rational Life.

How can we justify making such a distinction between various forms of life?

The Ideal form of Life refers to all living things, which includes unthinking Plants and Animals of various levels of Intelligence (with a corresponding breadth of capabilities available to them). Categorically, Animals may possess the capabilities of the Unreasoning Soul, the Reasoning Soul, and the Intellectual Soul ( see Notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, section 1). Consequently, we may categorize Animals in the following ways:

- A. Having the abilities of the Unreasoning Soul alone
- B. Having the abilities of both the Unreasoning Soul and the Reasoning Soul
- C. Having the abilities of all three of the Unreasoning Soul, the Reasoning Soul, and the Intellectual Soul

Making such a distinction, we find a natural hierarchy in which the number of intelligence based capabilities of those with only the Unreasoning Soul is fewer than those with the abilities of both the Unreasoning Soul and the Reasoning Soul. Further, we find that those who only have the abilities of both the Unreasoning Soul and the Reasoning Soul have fewer intelligence based capabilities than those who have the abilities of all three of the Unreasoning Soul, the Reasoning Soul, and the Intellectual Soul.

To grant us further distinction, we can rank each Animal within the above three categories on the breadth of their intelligence capabilities as well. For example, not all animals who have the abilities of the Reasoning Soul possess all of the same capabilities. A mouse may be able to press a lever and open a door for a treat, whereas Wolves can do this, and many other things which are impossible for a mouse. For example, Wolf packs can think several steps ahead of what is currently going on and eventually encircle prey. Generally speaking, one species has fewer or more capabilities available to them overall when compared with others.

If we consider that the very broad Ideal Form of Life consists in all of the different potential variations in the abilities lifeforms may possess, we can consider that a species with more capabilities than others participates in a greater percentage of the possible variations that the category of Life encompasses. For example, if a particular model of car can potentially come with three optional features (e.g. a sound system, heated seats, and a remote starter), than a car which possesses more of these optional features is a better representative of the ultimate potential feature set of that particular model. Put succinctly, the more capabilities an animal has, the greater the percentage of the Ideal Form of Life they may participate in, and thus the Fuller their life.

Making such distinctions allows us to resolve our questions about who may live well. Life forms with different capabilities may live well to different degrees as well. Some may only live well by nature of being in a good environment and fulfilling their natural functions, others may live well on higher order levels by experiencing pleasure, and others will be able to Intellectually relate these experiences to the higher Order Ideal forms to live well in an even higher order manner. With regards to intelligence and Life, the highest forms of intelligence allow abilities for interacting with the higher order Divine realm of Ideal Forms and Essences. As a result, the more intelligent an animal, the more fully it may participate in the Intellectual Realm.

With regards to Happiness, if we believe that Happiness is Good, then we must imply that Happiness also participates in Goodness (i.e. The Good).

Since Goodness exists in the Divine, we can conclude that those things which participate more in the Divine are capable of greater communion with Goodness. Thus, we can conclude that the animals which can participate the most fully in life are also capable of participating in more of the Divine, and thus more of the Good.

If we are to expand upon this subject to its logical conclusion, we arrive at the most Good, the most complete, the fullest. The One itself. The One is the most essential. Being perfectly complete, nothing can be added to it. Put another way, it already contains everything else.

Thus we can discern who may possess Happiness. Happiness is the possession of those who live fully. After all, Essences are complete categories (as opposed to their particular manifestations). Those who posses more of the possible particular manifestations of any essence are consequently more similar to the essence itself. Since the Good is the most full, and Happiness is a Good, then the Beings who are the most full may truly possess Happiness.

#### **1.4.4 Human Happiness as a Full Human Life**

Does Happiness reside in the Divine, or in a Human being who has achieved the fullest (i.e. most perfect) life? Since Happiness is attributed to Human Beings, a Human conception of happiness demands explanation.

From the arguments in previous section, we can conclude that the Human Being who lives the fullest life (and thus, must be Happy) must be one who engages in life Intellectually (in addition to engaging in it via the senses).

Considering this, the following question arises: Is Happiness something outside of a Human being, or is something which has its seat within the Human being?

For one, no Human Being lacks Happiness completely. Even if they have not achieved Happiness, they at least possess it in potentiality (i.e. they could be Happy). Given that all Human Beings have at least the potential for Happiness, it follows that Happiness is not something external to Humanity. Put another way, if 100% of Human Beings possess the potential for Happiness, then the potential for Happiness is part of the essence of a Human Being.

So, all Human beings possess Happiness potentially, but the Human Being who lives the fullest life has actualized the potential for Happiness. Again, the Human being who lives life Fully must engage in all aspects of living: sense perceptions, discursive reasoning, and Intellectual relations. By living the fullest life possible, a Human Being thus becomes in harmony with the fulness that is the Ideal Form of the Good, for the Good is by definition the most full. Put another way, if the Ideal Form of the Good is the fullest, then the most Good state on the level of the Human Being is the fullest Human life.

Since the Human who has achieved Happiness lives the fullest life a Human can, they no longer desire anything. After all, they are not absent of anything, and absence of something is a prerequisite to the desire of something. What more could something that is already full want? Because the Human is still joined with their body, they may feel the desire for the necessities of the body, and they may feel the pains and tribulations of the material. Yet the trials and tribulations of the material do not destroy the Happiness of the Human who lives fully. Happiness belongs to their highest self, and such material tribulations cannot take Intellectual Happiness away from them.

#### **1.4.5 Happiness and the Body**

There are some objections to the notion that Happiness requires the highest part of the Soul (i.e the Intellectual Soul). For one, there are various bodily misfortunes which affect us negatively. There is sickness and pain.

Certainly we are not happy when we are in pain, even though it only affects our body. For another, there are times in which we are not fully conscious (i.e. times we are not fully able to use our Intellectual faculty). People get knocked out and become inebriated. How could we be considered to live fully when we are not able to utilize an entire category of abilities available to us?

These objections are valid in the sense that anyone who is injured, ill, or unconscious cannot be called truly Happy. Even if we bear our misfortunes bravely and stoically, at a minimum, things are not occurring in accordance with our will. Since our will is not actualized, even if we take our pain as well as possible, we cannot truly be said to live a Full Life (and thus be Happy). Yet these objections do not discount the notion that the Intellectual Soul is required for Happiness.

The Sage who has achieved Happiness is still a Human Being. Only the Ideal Forms and Essences of the Divine are complete. Only the purely Metaphysical is Impossible. Since the Human Being exists in both the Metaphysical realm of Ideal Forms (through its Intellectual Soul) as well as the physical realm (through its physical body), Human Beings must attend to both in order to live a full life and achieve Happiness. Exercising the Intellectual Soul is necessary, but not sufficient for Happiness.

#### **1.4.6      The Eternal Pursuit of Happiness vs Temporary Material Desires**

If true Happiness is defined as participation in the higher order Divine essence of The Good, then why must we say that someone also needs to avoid sickness, pain, and other bodily misfortunes? How can we say that we must seek out materialistically beneficial situations (e.g. good health, possession of food and shelter, etc.), while holding that the real Good of Happiness is itself immaterial? If Happiness is truly our ultimate goal, do we need to add many other goals (e.g. good health, material possessions, etc.) to our list of aspirations?

To answer such questions, we must understand the difference between seeking something positive and avoiding something negative. When we are in a bad situation, we are motivated to improve our situation as to avoid its negative implications. For example, when we are sick, we naturally desire to get well in order to feel better. Yet when we are in good health, how often do we actively desire it? While many may pursue a healthy lifestyle all of the time, good habits do not compare in intensity with the naturally motivating urgency we experience when directly in the presence of some physical misfortune.

The highest phase of the Human Soul (i.e. the Intellectual Soul) is truly only concerned with harmonizing with the higher order Divine Good. The Soul actively pursues this Good alone. To the degree that it seeks to avoid the annoyance of physical misfortune, it does so as a means to end and not as an end in itself. Put another way, our goal always remains the same. When we are sick, we desire to get better, but once we are better, we no longer desire good health with fervor. Yet no matter whether we are sick or well, we always equally desire Happiness. The Goal of Happiness is eternally present, the goals of physical wellbeing are fleeting.

#### **1.4.7      The Eternal Experience of Happiness**

What can we say about the fact that possession of material benefits and bodily health are so enjoyable?

In the sense of Happiness as we have defined it, such things are not themselves sufficient. Yet material benefits and bodily health do contribute to the continuation of a Human life. The highest order Happiness consists in harmonization with the Divine, Intellectual principle of The Good. Because this aspect is entirely Intellectual, it is not dependent on the circumstances of the material realm.

What can we say about someone who has become Happy, but then after the fact experiences misfortune?

Common misfortunes happen to everyone frequently. If such misfortune were enough to shake someone out of their state of true Happiness, no one would be able to maintain it at all.

Some might object, and bring up the fact that there are some truly horrible misfortunes. They will say that perhaps someone can withstand the minor annoyances of daily life, but nothing so grave as the loss of a loved one, or the destruction of someone's home. What can we say about the Happy person who experiences a grave misfortune?

Once the Intellectual experience we refer to as Happiness has been experienced by someone, that experience remains in spite of whatever physical and bodily misfortunes happen after the fact. After all, that experience exists as Metaphysically and Eternally as the Divine concept of Happiness itself. Put another way, it will always be true that Happiness was experienced by this person (at least in the past). Even if the person who has experienced Happiness finds themselves in the greatest of misfortunes after the fact. Someone who has truly experienced the Divine itself cannot possibly forget such an experience. Put another way, an experience of an inferior kind (i.e. more specific and less complete) can never supersede an experience of a superior kind (i.e. encompassing more and more complete). For example, how could someone be truly shaken by the loss of any amount of money if they were guaranteed that all of their material wants and needs would be fulfilled for the rest of their lives?

Someone who has truly become Happy has transcended the material for the Divine (i.e. Metaphysical) as much as is possible for a living being. The Happy shall not covet material goods, because all material goods are inferior to the ultimate Good of the Divine. The Happy shall not fear death, for The Happy know that in death they will fully transcend into pure Divinity. Having experienced Divinity first hand, The Happy will intuitively understand what it means to say that death is better than material life. The Happy will not have concern for what happens to their body after death. It will inevitably disintegrate away whether it is entombed in a palace or thrown out to rot. The Happy will not be distraught at being taken prisoner, as material prisons are only temporary to the inevitability of death. The Happy will not concern themselves with the misfortunes of their loved ones. Such misfortunes are always possible, and the truly Happy will have made peace with this immovable fact. Further, such misfortunes are the responsibility of those who experience them. Their loved ones would be wise to be virtuous, and thus discover Happiness. Then their loved ones would also be able to take comfort in the inevitable Good which death offers. The truly Happy Sage owns their own existence, and knows that they cannot control the fate of other people.

#### **1.4.8      No Misfortune is Too Great**

If the truly Happy person undergoes a tremendous amount of misfortune, they will endure it as best they can. If the misfortune is more than they can possibly bear, then it may bring them to despair. Yet in such a state of despair, the truly Happy will not seek out any pity. The inner will of the Sage is not moved to the point of defeat. In spite of any despair felt in a particular situation, they wait for their next opportunity to improve. They may lose the battle, but they do not give up on the war. So long as a person is not dead, they retain the potential to improve their situation.

The Wise Sage does not perceive of suffering the same way that the average Human does. The Sage knows that the suffering they experience happens only to their body. It does not penetrate to the interior of their Soul.

To allow our material and bodily misfortunes to affect our Soul is the mark of weakness. Such weakness confesses a lack of true understanding about the natures of the Divine and Material. The unwise and weak will attempt to avoid suffering. The weakest may go to great lengths to avoid it. Further, it is weakness to ignore the misfortunes of others. The weak may think that they are too empathetic to bear the thought of the misfortune of other people, yet such a path of avoidance is merely self-serving. The path of avoidance is deprived of compassion and empathy. The weak may complain that it is human nature to despair at the misfortunes of others. Yet the Wise may rise above it. Given that the Wise may rise above it, we are compelled to virtuously purify ourselves of such weakness. It may be true that the average person falls prey to despair, but it is the path of those who are ascending to rise above the weakness and failures of the common person.

The Wise and Happy Sage understands that misfortune is part of life. They do not choose to avoid or ignore misfortune, but are resolved to meet the challenges with skill and Wisdom. Fear and avoidance are for children and the weak. While the Wise and Happy Sage does not invite misfortune upon themselves, they know that the deadliest blow misfortune can inflict is the loss of their resolve. The Wise takes solace in the knowledge that they can overcome any adversity so long as they don't let it destroy their will to do so.

#### **1.4.9      Happiness and The State of Consciousness**

Let us take a deeper look at the situation in which the Happy person loses consciousness (such as due to an injury or disease). Can they remain Happy in this situation?

The crux of the issues is whether or not being conscious is a prerequisite for virtue. If virtue does not terminate at the loss of consciousness, then one can remain virtuous, and thus Happy. If virtue does terminate upon the loss of consciousness, then so must the Happiness of the unconscious individual. Put another way, can a person remain virtuous if they are unable to actively act virtuously?

Upon reflection, there is no reason to suppose that someone becomes any less virtuous merely at the absence of consciousness. A virtuous character is something someone possesses. Even if someone is not actively engaging in virtuous behavior, the fact that they are the type of person who is virtuous has not changed. Similarly, a good-looking person possess good looks when they are unconscious or unaware of it, and a person in good health remains healthy despite their conscious understanding of that fact. Further, if Virtuousness and

Happiness were lost upon the loss of consciousness, we would also have to hold that people lose their Virtue and Happiness every night when they fall asleep. Since people do not lose all their Wisdom when they are asleep, people do not lose their Virtue and Happiness either.

Some may object that when we are asleep, we are unable to engage in the Intellectual act of self-reflection. Does a lack of active self-reflection entail that someone has lost their Happiness as well?

This objection, and the objection about actively engaging in virtuous behavior both share a similar error in thinking. Such objections suppose that Wisdom and Happiness are incidental features of someone. It implies that Wisdom and Happiness do not exist in of themselves, but only exist due to a sort of emergence when someone is thinking or acting in a specific way. Yet Wisdom and Happiness are self-contained Principles. They exist conceptually without reference to any specific instance of a Wise thought or Happy experience. The concepts of Wisdom and Happiness remain regardless of whether or not someone is engaging in them. Similarly, the fact that a Wise and Happy person is (at least up to this point) the type of person who engages in these eternal concepts does not change merely because they are not directly engaged in specific types of thoughts or actions at any given point in time. Put another way, only through unwise thoughts and actions can someone who was previously Virtuous and Happy corrupt their participation in these Principles.

Also worth noting is the fact that when we lose consciousness, this only affects the parts of the Human Soul dependent on the material body (i.e. the Unreasoning and Reasoning parts of the Soul). The Ideal Forms and Essences which make up our Intellectual soul remain unchanged in spite of the circumstances our body finds itself in (see Notes on Ennead One, First Tractate Sections 11, 12, and 13).

#### **1.4.10      Intellect and Self-Consciousness**

Much of our confusion regarding Intelligence and our Intellectual capabilities resides in the fact that they are not directly perceptible to us via our sensory faculties. Our understanding of all things material necessarily comes through our sensory perceptions of them, and so it is natural to wonder if things can exist and have consequences if they are not directly perceptible to us via the senses.

If we argue that Intellection is an act of the Soul, and if we argue that the Soul precedes the material body (and as a result, our base level emotions and sense perceptions which are reliant on our physical organs), then it should be possible for the Soul to engage in Intellectual acts prior to its coupling with a physical body. Further, all perceptions that we experience occur partly on the Intellectual level. We do not merely experience our sense perceptions directly, but rather we always self-reflect on these experiences. On the other hand, we can and do have Intellectual thoughts without any sensory inputs present. Given this, we have reason to believe that Intellectual capabilities are a prerequisite for our Human experience of sensations, but it is not necessarily the case that sense perceptions are a prerequisite for Intellectual acts. Something can only be said to be a prerequisite for something else if it is present 100% of the time the consequent thing is.

The trick is as follows. When we have something to sense, these sense perceptions act like a mirror. We are able to perceive our Intellectual processes indirectly via contemplation of ourselves perceiving these things. When we do not have any sense perceptions present, we lose our allegorical mirror, and consequently lose our indirect

perception of our Intellectual actions. When we remove a mirror, we can no longer see the reflection of the object in the mirror. Yet the object remains in tact despite of our inability to perceive it through the mirror's reflection. Such is the case with our Intellect. Without sense perceptions to indirectly perceive it, we lose sight of our Intellect. Our inability to perceive it (if only indirectly) does not entail that it is no longer present.

There are many other examples of things which are present even though we are not actively perceiving them. When we read intently, we often become so engrossed in the writing that we do not even sense that we are reading. When we act bravely, we are often so caught up in the moment that we do not sense the danger we are in. In many ways, it appears that the more intensely we sense something, the less self-conscious of it we are. It is as though these acts of sensation occupy a portion of our overall capacity, and leave less capacity (i.e. bandwidth) for the thing we are actually doing. From this fact, it follows that the Virtual Sage may live the most fully when not bogged down by physical sensory perceptions.

#### **1.4.11 Criticisms of Internalized and Personal Happiness**

Here we have arrived at a caricature of the Wise Sage, so engrossed in virtue that they can barely perceive it (such as we barely perceive it when we are engrossed in reading). Critics may argue that someone in such a state can't really be said to be Happy.

One criticism is that such a person is not fully alive. Those who hold this opinion do not understand how someone can be Happy while their experience of the material world is diminished. Yet just because they don't understand how such a state can bring about Happiness, it does not at all follow that such a person is not still alive. We have already assumed as our initial premises that this Sage is Virtuous. Given that the Sage is both alive and Virtuous, should we not then grant that they are Happy? In fact, it is rather silly to deny that someone is alive, and then afterwards wonder about whether they are Happy. Is it not a presupposition that someone is alive if we are to wonder about their Happiness?

Some may argue that a lack of contact with external sensations precludes Happiness. Yet we have already concluded that the sage is Virtuous and in a state where their experience of the material world is diminished. We have no reason to insert a necessity for external experiences. Nowhere in our discussions of virtue have we mentioned such a need (see notes on Ennead One, Second Tractate). In fact, claiming that Happiness depends on some external factors denies that Happiness is a self-contained principle in of itself. If Happiness requires an external experience of something as well as an experiencer, it becomes a compound aggregate of these parts. The Happiness of an individual is self-contained within that individual. After all, a Happy person has many desires which are not realized. For example, a Happy Virtuous person surely wishes that every other Human being will be Happy to. The fact that not everyone is Happy does not rule out the Happiness of an individual. Nor is it realistic to expect that everyone can be Happy at the same time.

Others may protest that being Happy despite wishes being unfulfilled is irrational. After all, Evils are always present in the world, and surely the Happy sage wishes that Evil was not present. Yet in claiming such a person is irrational, they admit that such a person is internally Happy. After all, such an irrationality presupposes that they are both Happy, and also that their desires have not yet been fulfilled.

#### **1.4.12      The Metaphysical Happiness of the Sage**

The pleasures of the Virtuous Sage are not bodily pleasures. The Virtuous Sage pursues the higher order Virtuous of the Soul, which reside in the Metaphysical. For this reason, it can even be argued that physical pleasures are distractions which detract from the higher order Happiness. In fact, even though we rightly say that the Virtuous Sage is truly Happy, we have no reason to say that such a state entails a resultant bodily sensation of delight. What purpose do material delights serve to the realm of things which are immaterial?

Given then that true joys and pleasures are not sensory or physical, what can we say of them? The pleasure of the truly Wise and Happy sage stems from direct experience of the higher order Metaphysical Good. Because they have an Intellectual understanding of what these Goods are, they may enjoy them via the Intellectual appreciation of participating in them. Such knowledge results in a state of peace. Intellectually knowing that they are Virtuous, the Sage is unfazed by the trials, tribulations, and Evils which afflict Human Beings. Those who seek physical pleasures via the virtuous life, do not in fact seek the virtuous life at all.

#### **1.4.13      The Happiness of the Sage Remains Under Good and Bad Circumstances**

A characteristic of the truly Virtuous is that the nature of their actions do not change. Although they may find themselves in variously good or bad circumstances (i.e. they may have good or bad fortune), they are guided by an Intellectual understanding of the higher order Virtues and a pursuit of Goodness. Situations which could selfishly benefit the Sage are treated no differently than low stakes situations which could not, marking the Virtuous decisions made even under high stakes as especially admirable.

If the virtuous person does not know what to do or think immediately, they will be guided by these higher order principles, which direct them towards the best outcomes possible. Even if they are tortured horrifically (e.g. they are put into the Bull of Phaleras), their attraction remains towards the Good. After all, torture and violence may only afflict the physical. The Virtuous Sage always remains in contact with the Metaphysical Good, which remains impervious.

#### **1.4.14      Happiness of the Human Soul**

Human Beings (and possibly other sentient beings) are not merely the complement of a Body and a Soul. This is especially the case for the Wise Sage who has diminished their material connections. Via the Intellect, Human Beings can disengage from the limitations of bodily sensations (i.e the Unreasoning Soul) and the simple. In doing so, a Human Being may reflect on what they are doing, relate concepts and events, and otherwise directly engage with Intellectual Beings. These Intellectual acts are Essential to the Human Soul, and we cannot disengage with them in the same way we can the senses. Because a Human Being possesses essential parts to their Soul in addition to their physical body (i.e. the Intellectual parts), Human Happiness must not have its seat in the physical body.

Happiness is found in those who live a life full of The Good. Put another way, Happiness is the possession of a

Good life. Since the life of a human being does not reside in the physical body alone (because humans are able to engage and interact with the Intellectual/Metaphysical), it follows that the Happy human life cannot either. Conversely, we cannot call vegetables Happy by the same definition of Happy as we have applied to the Human Life. Vegetables cannot engage in the Intellectual, and are therefore excluded from the Goods which are unique to Intellectual abilities.

A strong and healthy body and a naturally good mood are not sufficient for true Happiness. In fact, possession of too many bodily and material Goods often serves as a distraction from the Intellectual. The enjoyment of such physical things can become motivation for a person, and they will spend their time in pursuit of the bodily pleasures instead of focusing on the Intellectual Goods. For the Virtuous, the urges of the body are something to be tamed.

The materially focused individual may be handsome, they may be wealthy, and they may possess the power to rule the entire world. Yet without appreciation for the Intellectual Goods, there is nothing to be envious of in such people. The Wise Sage may not become rich in earthly ways, especially when they share (and compete in many ways with) a society full of people who make it their only purpose in life to obtain the material pleasures. Further, even if the Sage somehow were to come into wealth, they would have the wisdom to diminish it such that they are not tempted to the pursuit of material pleasures. To overcome the temptation of bodily health, they will not pursue excessive bodily strength and beauty. Though they will preserve their physical health, their only purpose in such pursuits will be to avoid or diminish physical suffering and illness.

In spite of this, Material temptations are natural, and will likely arise and tempt even the Sage throughout the course of their life. If they do not, the Sage would be wise to seek out their experience during their youth. In experiencing these Evils, the Sage may come to know that they are not worth pursuing. In their old age, the true Wise Sage will desire nothing, avoiding pain and pleasure in the same manner. They may use their powers to avoid suffering and pain, but equally they will not pursue wealth, fame, physical pleasure, nor any of the other material pleasures. Neither will they allow their contraries to affect their Happiness.

When someone cannot gain anything by the addition of material pleasures, it follows that they cannot lose anything by having them taken away.

#### **1.4.15      Wealth and Fortune Cannot Improve Happiness**

To illustrate the above points let us imagine two equally Virtuous and Wise people. However, let us also imagine that one of these people in addition has everything they could possibly want. Things including wealth, health, beauty, fame, and anything else. Can we say that the one who has more worldly fortune is Happier?

No! Ultimately, we must conclude that if they are equally wise, they are equally Happy. The things which ultimately make a Human Being Happy are not physical or material. Given that they are Metaphysically equal (i.e. they are equally Wise), there is nothing to distinguish one of them as Happier than the other. For example, now consider two musicians. If two musicians were equally skilled at playing an instrument, no amount of wealth, fame, or physical beauty could make one of them a better musician than the other by itself.

Those who object and argue that the wealthier, healthier person must also be Happier do so out of ignorance. They believe that Happiness relates to physical and material fortunes, and project this ignorance onto their judgement of the Wise Sages. A truly Wise Sage is indifferent to such inconsequential things. In fact, we cannot claim that a person is Wise if they are not yet rid of the desire for such vanities.

The truly Wise Sage understands that Wisdom and Virtue are the only things of any real importance. Knowing that their Happiness is Metaphysical means it is theirs to possess in any set of material circumstance. Such Wisdom transforms them and makes them impervious to the fear of any Evil. The only thing to fear is that we are not Wise enough.

Should the Wise find themselves momentarily overcome with fear, it will only be in moments when they have not had the time to reflect and think clearly. In such cases, the Wise are quick to guide themselves away from such thoughts and feelings, like guiding a child through pain. Just as a child can easily be calmed down by an adult that they trust, the Wise Sage can calm themselves.

This Wisdom must not cause the Sage to be cruel or lack empathy for their friends. The pinnacle of strictness is to be reserved for oneself. On the contrary, the Wise Sage invests in their friends as though they were investing in themselves. Always guided by Intellectual reflection, the Wise Sage lends such insights to others.

#### **1.4.16. Intellectual Happiness and the Utility of the Body**

Must we really conclude that truly Happy sage finds Happiness as an eternal, Intellectual thing? Why must we not conclude that Happiness of the Sage could be affected by events in their worldly life?

It is because such a conception of Happiness is incorrect and impure. If we argue that events in the realm of material life can affect Happiness, they we imply that Happiness is a composite sort of thing which has both worldly and metaphysical components. Since we know that the essential Ideal Form of Happiness must be purely metaphysical (i.e. the concept itself is Metaphysical), then we must conclude that material matters cannot affect it. For example, material events can never change the rules of Geometry. Consequently, a Human Being whose supposed Happiness is affected by worldly events cannot truly be said to possess Happiness.

It is for these reasons that Plato argued that to be truly Happy, Human Beings must transcend the Material world for the Intellectual realm. Only by reaching harmonic resonance with the Intellectual Good can one become truly Happy. As a result, the Wise holds such a transcendence as their ultimate goal.

With this in mind, the Wise Sage should not put too much emphasis on their lot in life and physical state. Caring about such matters is only to be valued in so far as it keeps us alive and in good enough health as to not inhibit us on our path to transcendence. Knowing that our true life and correct goals lie in the Immortal realm of the Intellectual, the Sage is not afraid of the material death of the body. In fact, the truly Wise can take comfort in knowing that they may end their material life if Wisdom deems it prudent to do so. Such knowledge makes the Sage truly the master of their own fate.

Although true Intellectual Happiness and transcendence is the ultimate goal of the sage, they are not to take these facts as an excuse to neglect their body completely. A musician cares for, maintains, and repairs their instrument for as long as they need to play it. Yet if the time comes in the musician's life that they no longer need to play their instrument, they may set it aside as it no longer is useful to them. They need not view the discarded instrument with scorn. Though they no longer need it, it has served a useful purpose to them. It is in this way that the Sage is to view their material body. They are to maintain it and use it while it helps them along their path, but can let it go without fear or sorrow when it is of no more assistance. Such is the transcendence of the truly Happy.

## Notes on Plotinus – Ennead One, Fifth Tractate – The Eternal Nature of Happiness

### **1.5.1      Happiness is a State of Being**

Does one's Happiness necessarily increase over time?

Happiness is felt only in moments in time, namely the present. For example, someone can remember that they used to be Happy, while currently being unhappy. Happiness is therefore a state of Being (i.e. a state of the Soul). To illustrate this, let us examine the state of being Alive. Of course, we can only call someone Alive if they are at the present moment in the state of being Alive. The same is true for being Happy. We can only be said to be Happy if we are Happy in the present moment.

### **1.5.2      Desires Are Only Satisfied in the Present Moment**

Some may object, and argue that Happiness comes from the satisfaction of an innate desire to live (i.e. Exist). On this view, for every moment that we continue to live, our Happiness increases with each moment's satisfaction of this desire. Thus, some argue, Happiness may increase over time.

There are several problems with this objection. For one, it assumes that there must be a linear increase of Happiness over time. The increase is merely the result of living. Every day that we are alive, we would attain an equal amount of additional happiness. This is incompatible with any possibility that the ways in which we conduct our lives could increase (or decrease) our Happiness. If Happiness is merely the satisfaction of the desire to live, a Virtuous life would not increase Happiness more than a unvirtuous life.

Another problem, is that this would mean that the Gods and Divinities themselves would increase in Happiness as time went on as well. After all, their innate desire to exist would be continually satisfied. This implies that they always have the potential to increase their own happiness (by existing for additional moments in time). In turn, this requires that the Gods and Divinities are incomplete. If they were complete and perfect, there would be no room for more Happiness. Even worse, they wouldn't even have the potential for completeness or perfection. After all, there is always more time to exist, and (on this view) more Happiness to attain as a result.

Such objections betray a lack of understanding about the nature of desire. The appreciation of a satisfied desire may only exist in the present moment. For example, the desire to live is the animal's desire to Exist. Whether something Exists or not (e.g. whether something lives or not) is only true or false for a particular moment in time. The desire to be alive in the future is merely a desire to preserve the life one already has. If this *possibility* increases Happiness, it is because in the present moment, someone possess that possibility.

The desire for something in the future is a desire for some possibility to eventually become an actuality in a particular moment. When the actualization of a possibility increases Happiness, it is because it has become an actuality in the present moment.

### **1.5.3      Happy Experiences Do Not Necessarily Increase Happiness**

What about someone who has lived a Happy life for a long time, and has consequently experienced a longer period of Happiness? Would this not be a way that Happiness may increase over time?

If the person who has lived a Happy life for a long time has used this time gain a deeper and more intuitive understanding of Happiness' Nature from this experience, then we can say that the passage of time has benefitted them. Yet it is not that the mere passage of time while Happy has itself increased Happiness. Rather, the fact that the person has gained Wisdom allows them to pursue Happiness more effectively. Put another way, Happy experiences can change someone's state of Being such that they are Wiser and better able to achieve Happiness. As discussed earlier, such a State of Being necessarily exists in the moment. (see Notes Ennead One, Fifth Tractate, Section 1). We can imagine someone who has achieved a certain level of Happiness, but becomes complacent in this and as a result ceases to learn and grow. They may retain their current level of Happiness (along with whatever Wisdom and Virtue got them there), but Happiness will not increase unless they gain more Wisdom and purification via Virtue.

### **1.5.4      The Past Cannot Make Us Happier**

What if we consider two individuals who have become Happy, with one of them who was able to reach this point at an earlier date? Wouldn't the pleasure experienced from such a Happy life increase Happiness, and thus be an example Happiness increasing over time? Wouldn't the person who was Happy longer be Happier than the other person for it?

For one, we need to be careful about what we mean by pleasure. If by pleasure we mean bodily and emotional satisfaction, then we are talking about something which has nothing to do with true Intellectual Happiness.

If we are talking about pleasure as the gaining of Wisdom and engagement with Intellectual reasoning, then pleasure is synonymous with Happiness as used in this text. Happiness only exists in a particular moment, based on the circumstances and Virtue of a person. Regardless of however someone has felt (i.e. Happy or Unhappy) in the past, they have come to feel the way that they do now. The past has already played its part, and only the circumstances in the present moment matter. If both people are Happy now, we cannot grant the advantage to either person.

### **1.5.5      Happiness in the Present Is Superior**

A clever objector might ask us to consider three individuals: One who has been Happy from the beginning of their life through to now, one who attained Happiness only just this moment, and a third who used to be Happy, but lost their Happiness. If Happiness does not increase over time, then should we concede that all three of them are equally Happy?

The important fact of the matter in this case is simply, in the present moment, who possesses Happiness? The only way someone can have an advantage in Happiness over another person is if one of them is Happy in the

present moment but the other is not. To answer the question above, the two who are Happy at present moment posses a superior Happiness to the one who is no longer Happy. For the two who are both Happy in the present moment. Between these two, no advantage can be granted to either.

#### **1.5.6      Evil Also Does Not Increase Merely With Time**

It is generally the consensus that negative things increase in negativity over time. For example, it is worse to be sick for a year than it is to be sick for a week. It is worse to have less food than you need for a year than for a week. It is worse to be homeless for a year than it is to be for a week. If we can agree that such Evils increase in how bad they are over time, why can we not say the same for Happiness?

For one, the destructive results of such Evils generally increase over time. For example, if someone is ill for a long time, their body degrades more and more the longer they are ill. Yet is this always the case for all Evils? Imagine an Evil which does not impart a cumulative destruction over time. In this case, the past history of the Evil does not matter in the present moment. If someone suffers the same Evil that they did in the past, but there is no cumulative damage, then they are no worse off now than they were before. Consider being color blind, or possessing an inherent cognitive defect. In such cases, the afflicted person's predicament has not gotten worse over time, even though such misfortune has been present the whole time. From this, we can see that it is not the length of time that an Evil has been present which adds to misfortune. It is the cumulative destruction which results from said Evil which has increased. Further, the current state of such destruction is something which only exists at the present moment.

With regards to Happiness, we can see that the situation is the same. Happiness felt over a longer time does not itself result in an increase in Happiness. Only a process which increase Happiness (which would by definition be the various Virtues) that has been engaged with over time can increase Happiness. The resultant Happiness, though, always exists in the present moment.

#### **1.5.7      Happiness Is Essential**

Clearly when we refer to Time itself, it is obvious that Time spans increase in duration as Time goes on. For example, when we consider how long we have been alive, we count up the total duration of Time we have been alive through to the present. What is it about Happiness which excludes it from this type of process? On the other hand, why should we avoid treating Time like Happiness? Why shouldn't we reject consideration of past instances of time when speaking of its quantity in the present moment?

To answer such questions, we need to understand the type of thing that Time is, and the type of thing Happiness is. Each instance of Time can be thought of as a variant manifestation (i.e. an image, or imperfect specific example) of Eternity. Only Eternity encapsulates all possible Time periods. Only Eternity is complete with regards to Time. It then stands to reason that each span of Time is incomplete. It is only representative of the period defined by its starting and ending boundaries. When the Time span is over, there is nothing to speak of it in the present tense. From this line of thinking, we can see that it is therefore possible to add or subtract to it without contradicting its fundamental Essence. We can extend its end boundary, or we can push back its starting

boundary. This is what is meant by stating that Time is imperfect, or incomplete. All Time spans can be added to (or subtracted from). Once a Time span has ended, it is forever in the past. As a result, things which are Temporal in nature have definitive beginnings and ends. Once something is bound by a specific Time span, it becomes impermanent, as it ceases to be when that Time span ends.

The question then becomes, is Happiness similar to the type of thing Time is, or is it similar to the type of thing Eternity is? Previously we have defined Happiness as the Good life, or the Full Human Life (see Notes on Ennead One, Fourth Tractate). This really means that Happiness is a life lived in accordance with one's Essential nature or Essence (i.e. Proper Function, Arete). Whether someone is living a Happy life is a binary. Either someone is Happy, or they are not Happy. Having been Happy in the past does not necessarily mean that someone will be Happy in the Present.

There are important consequences of this distinction. For one, this implies that Time is not an Essence in of itself, but rather is a feature of something else. Time is an Attribute (i.e Non-Being), not an independent Being (i.e. Real Being). Real Beings may have temporal Attributes, but Time cannot be spoken of in of itself without relating it to some other thing (i.e. some Real Being). Happiness, on the other hand, means to be harmonized with something eternal (i.e. an Essence). Things which are Essences (i.e. have Real Being) transcend the Temporal by definition. Essences encompass all possible variant manifestations congruent with themselves, and consequently encompass all possible Temporal instances of things within scope. Happiness, as something Essential, must be something which transcends Time. Happiness must be something which exists in Eternity. Consequently, Time cannot possibly increase Happiness, as Happiness is transcendent to Temporal spans.

### **1.5.8        Memories of the Past Do Not Increase Present Happiness**

Can our memories of when we were Happy in the past contribute to our Happiness in the present moment? To answer this question, we must examine what is being remembered in this context.

One possible interpretation is that memories of attained Wisdom can make us Happy in the present moment. In this case, the memory of the Wisdom attained is not responsible for Happiness. Rather, the Wisdom gained (and the remembrance of such Wisdom) creates a wise person. As a result, if such memories increase Happiness in the present, it is only because they enable us to act wisely in the present.

Perhaps remembering how pleasurable it felt to be Happy in the past could make us Happy in the present moment. This line of thinking supposes that pleasure is a prerequisite (or even sufficient in of itself) for Happiness. If this were the case, then the wise would seek out pleasure in order to be Happy. Yet shouldn't the truly Happy be self-content? Could pleasures increase the Happiness of someone who is already full? It is also uncertain whether memoires of past pleasure increase our sense of pleasure in the present. What good is the memory of something eaten yesterday if we cannot eat it at present? Further, memories fade over time. What effect is the memory of something pleasurable which happened so long ago that it is difficult to remember? Reveling in bygone memories of pleasure makes as little sense as taking pride in Wisdom that we once knew but have since forgotten.

### **1.5.9      Memoires of Past Beauty Only Tempt Those Without Present Beauty**

Can memories of Beautiful and Virtuous things increase our Happiness?

Such a yearning for past instances of Beauty and Virtue implies that none is present. After all, how can you yearn for something that you currently possess? Such a person without Virtue could not possibly be Happy.

### **1.5.10     Happiness Does Not Have External Causes**

Someone who has lived a Virtuous and Happy life for a long time has had more opportunities to do good deeds than someone who has only been Happy for a short period of time. Can such opportunities (presumably when acted upon) result in more Happiness over time?

Such a position entails that good deeds are sufficient for Happiness. This cannot be the case, as past good deeds are no longer affecting the present moment (because they are by definition things that happened in the past). It is exactly this fact which was our reason for stating that Happiness exists in the present moment to begin with. After all, we can only be said to be Happy if we are Happy in the present moment (if we are not presently Happy, then we merely were Happy at one or more occasions in the past). A meal we ate weeks ago cannot satisfy our hunger today. (see Notes on Ennead One, Fifth Tractate, Section 1).

This fact lead us to investigate then if there is a relationship between Happiness and length of time. Are we Happier than someone else overall if we have experienced a state of Happiness for a longer time than them? We are left to wonder if Happiness increases the longer we exist in a Happy state. After all, this will grant us the opportunities for good deeds and Happy experiences that only a greater time span can provide.

To get to the heart of this question, we must ask whether an active (i.e. someone who engages in many activities and deeds) person must be Happier than an inactive person. The fact that there are Happy people who do not lead particularly active lives disproves this notion. Someone who is inactive can be just as Happy as anyone else. This is ultimately because actions and deeds are not what ultimately make someone Happy. Happiness is a state of Being, and more specifically, a state of mind. In reality, the causal order is the opposite. Happy states of Being cause us to do good deeds, not the other way around.

The Wise Sage enjoys Happiness while active, but Happiness is not a consequence of their actions. The Sage's Happiness is self-contained. Their Happiness is derived from knowledge of the Good (see Notes on Ennead One, Fourth Tractate, Section 12). Even the wicked are capable of good deeds and pleasurable experiences, but without Wisdom and Virtue such experiences cannot make them Happy. True Happiness is a disposition of the Soul. Only through true Wisdom and Intellectual appreciation can the Sage experience Happiness. Such Wisdom is a part of the Happy person themselves, and is not caused by anything external to them.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Sixth Tractate - Of Beauty

### **1.6.1      Beauty Is Not Merely Proportion and Symmetry**

How is it that we first come to experience Beauty? Perhaps first it is through our sense of sight. We see Beautiful things as soon as our eyes are open. We also experience Beauty via the sense of hearing very early. First through people who speak Beautifully, but also through Beautiful songs. We are seemingly able to abstract from these early sensory experiences a concept of Beauty as a whole, and eventually can recognize it in other places. We can eventually see the Beauty in someone skillful, in Intellectual pursuit, actions taken, and ultimately the Virtues themselves.

What causes us to perceive these various things as Beautiful? How are we able to recognize things as Beautiful? There are a multitude of Beautiful objects, sights, sounds, and ideas. Is there a single standard of Beauty which encompasses them all, or does each individual thing have its own standard of Beauty? Ultimately, we must ask, what is the Principle of Beauty itself? If there are multiple, what are the various Principles of Beauty for different circumstances?

There are some things which are inherently Beautiful, such as Virtue. Surely there is no Virtue which is not Beautiful. Then there are some things, such as material objects, which are not universally Beautiful. Some material objects are Beautiful, and some are not. Given that this is the case, the bodies which are Beautiful must be as such because they participate in a principle above them (i.e. an Ideal Form). Let us first examine the principle of Beauty which Beautiful objects participate in. From there, we can extrapolate and answer additional questions.

The Stoic take on this question is that visual Beauty is a consequence of the proportions and symmetry of the parts of something. On this view, the proportion of these parts to each other, as well as their proportion to the entirety of the visual object itself make it Beautiful. Especially if the parts are colored in a complimentary way. If a sort of proportionality and symmetry are necessary for an object to be Beautiful, then Beauty must be something compound. If Beauty is proportion and symmetry among constituent parts, and if something has no constituent parts, then it follows that such a simple thing could not be Beautiful. The same can be said for the constituent parts of something Beautiful. The parts themselves being simple and having no further constituent parts would have no means by which to engage in proportion or symmetry.

This is an odd conclusion. After all, we should only be able to create something Beautiful by combining things which are themselves Beautiful. To suggest otherwise implies that someone could create something Beautiful by combining a variety of hideous parts together. Even worse, all manner of simple things would be excluded from Beauty if symmetry and proportion are prerequisites. A single ray of sunlight, a single piece of gold, and a single shining star would all have Beauty denied to them on this view. This is also true for music. While a harmony of notes could be Beautiful, no single note could ever be called Beautiful. For music, we similarly end up with the problem in that several Ugly notes can be added together to create a Beautiful melody.

To further illustrate that proportion and symmetry themselves do not constitute Beauty, let us examine other, more complicated Beautiful things. Occupations, laws, and sciences can all possess Beauty. Yet what does proportion have to do with any of them? Further, things can be proportional and possess symmetry while not

being Beautiful for it. Consider the following absurd propositions: Wisdom is the weakening of the mind. Justice is the manifestation of foolishness. Such statements are mutually agreeable. They imply that someone who is Wise is also likely to be Just. Yet their mutual proportion and symmetry do not make them Beautiful, and certainly do not make them true. What makes Justice and Wisdom Beautiful is their Divine truth. Yet they are themselves complete and total. They possess no constituent parts for symmetry or proportion. We have previously discussed the components of the Human Soul (See notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1). Who could describe what proportions of them will result in Beauty? If beauty is proportion and symmetry, what could make pure Intelligence Beautiful?

For these reasons, we must conclude that proportion and symmetry by themselves do not constitute Beauty. Beauty then must be a higher order principle which both simple and compound things can participate in. We consequently must account for this principle.

### **1.6.2 To Be Beautiful Is to Participate in an Ideal Form**

Let us return our attention to the experience of visually Beautiful objects. The experience of a Beautiful object is nearly immediate and intuitive. The same can be said for Ugly objects. Such a direct and immediate perception of Beauty (or Ugliness) can only be explained if it is perceived directly by the Soul intuitively. If this were not the case, it would take time (i.e. multiple steps) to experience the object and deduce its Beauty rationally. Given that the Soul can directly recognize Beauty without any intermediaries, it must be concluded that Soul and Beauty are of the same quality. If they were not, there would need to be an intermediary medium for the Soul to perceive Beauty through. This is further proof the Beauty resides in the higher order realm of the Intellectual (i.e. Divine Principles or Ideal Forms).

If Beauty is Intellectual, how can material objects be Beautiful? We have previously discussed how, given the fact that not all physical objects are Beautiful, it must be the case then that the Beautiful ones participate in a higher order quality which is not essential to all physical objects. It then stands to reason that Ugly objects fail to participate in such a higher order quality. Such higher order qualities which things may participate in are none other than the Ideal Forms themselves. From this, we can conclude that what makes something Beautiful is its participation in an Ideal Form. Conversely, we can then define something as Ugly which does not totally participate in an Ideal Form. The Ugliest of things then would be completely formless, not participating in any Ideal Forms, even by a small degree.

The most Beautiful things participate in an Ideal Form maximally, and in doing so their constituent parts (if there are any) harmonize and become one complete thing. For example, a Beautiful house is a building whose constituent parts unify to perfectly harmonize with the Ideal Form of Houses. Each individual part must also be harmonized with its respective Ideal Form for each individual part to be Beautiful. For example, a Beautiful board must be maximally harmonized with the Ideal Form of Boards. From here, the overall Beauty of each individual piece lends itself to the overall harmony and Beauty of the completed house itself. Thus, the simple and compound both are Beautiful by the same criteria.

### 1.6.3 How an Incorporeal Soul May Experience Beauty in Material Things

If it is the Soul itself which perceives Beauty, then the Soul consequently must have a faculty for such appreciations. This faculty must be separate from other faculties, as Beauty is its own distinction which may incorporate or be separate from other judgments which can be made about something. If the Soul appreciates Beauty in something that is also of a metaphysical nature (i.e. something of a similar kind to the Soul itself), it may do so directly. But how can a Soul perceive Beauty in something which is not of the same kind as itself, such as a material object? In these cases, what can bridge the gap between the metaphysical and the physical?

Let us consider an example to illuminate this question. How can an architect use their Intellectual idea of a building to then judge that a particular physical building is Beautiful? The only possible explanation is that the material building bears the physical form of the metaphysical Ideal Form of Buildings. By abstracting the forms of the physical building and the components which make up the building, the architect realizes that material becomes unified into one thing under the umbrella of the Ideal Form of Buildings. The matter of the building as arranged then participates as a variant manifestation of the Ideal Form of Buildings.

From this, we can deduce the nature of the faculty of the soul which identifies Beauty in material objects. This faculty works by appreciating the Ideal Form which something participates in. For something material, the recognition of the Ideal Form it participates in occurs via recognition of the shapes, sizes, relative positions, and interactions of its component parts. Once the Soul has perceived the overarching form of a material object which encompasses all of its component parts, it may then relate this single unified Intellectual thing to the Soul itself. The process is similar to the way a Virtuous old person might recognize the early signs of Virtue in someone young. They appreciate this young person via their shared experience of being Virtuous. The shared similarity then acts as a medium by which two similar things may grasp each other.

The appreciation of color is similar. In abstracting the color of a material object which has been illuminated, a person can recognize the color that it is. From there, it can be related to other objects which are the same color. Ultimately, it is via the recognition of a material object's participation in a higher order Ideal Form. For example, someone might see a red apple, recognize it as red in color, and realize that this Redness is the same as the Redness which a red rose participates in.

It is for this reason that fire is the most Beautiful of all material objects. Being as close to immaterial as possible while still ultimately remaining material, it illuminates the nature of the Incorporeal Ideal Forms. Like Fire, physical objects receive the image of the Ideal Forms, however the Ideal Forms and Fire remain impassible to the material objects themselves. Fire heats a material object without itself being cooled down, and Fire itself illuminates by reflecting the color of other objects. Material objects cannot cool down or illuminate Fire. These relationships are one way. An object which cannot properly reflect the Fire's light is discolored and appears ugly. Similarly, a material body which cannot completely reflect an Ideal Form is never fully Beautiful.

The same can be said for Music as well. Although a melody cannot be heard from a signal note, in hearing all of the notes in a melody, we may abstract from their pitch, duration, and relative position to other notes that they combine to form something larger than themselves. Melodies are imperceptibly derived from the individual notes, but the faculty of the Soul can recognize that the individual notes become unified to form a single melody which

is Beautiful. We can recognize the same melody played on different instruments, and see that they are different variant manifestations of the same song.

Now we have adequately described how our sense perceptions of material objects and music can be unified into a single Intellectual object which the soul can grasp as Beautiful. Such sensed Beauty is the result of the object or sound's unification into an image of an Ideal Form (e.g. the Ideal Form of a building or melody).

#### **1.6.4      The Superior Beauty Perceptible to the Soul Alone**

Let us examine in more detail the types of Beauty which are only reachable via our higher order Intellectual faculties (i.e. the Intellectual Soul).

With regards to Beautiful things of the material world, we are only able to grasp them via our physical senses. For example, a blind person has no way of coming to know visual Beauty, and a deaf person has no way of coming to know auditory Beauty. From this, it follows that higher order Intellectual Beauties may only be grasped by those who are versed in the ways of Intellectual reasoning. How could someone with no knowledge of the Sciences recognize the Beauty in Scientific endeavors? How could someone with no knowledge of a skillset, occupation, or trade recognize any Beauty within said skillset, occupation, or trade? This is also true with regards to the Virtues. How could someone appreciate doing the right thing with no knowledge of Justice? How could someone appreciate self-control with no knowledge of Temperance?

It is said that the morning and evening stars themselves cannot compare to the Beauty of the Virtues. Such Beauty may only be enjoyed via the use of the Intellectual faculties. Only by Intellectual contemplation and abstraction can someone discover the true completeness of the higher order Essences, Ideal Forms, and ultimately the Divine itself. Such visions are reserved for the Soul's higher order faculty for the identification of Beauty alone. Those who can appreciate such Beauties will experience pleasure far greater than anything material sensation could ever provide, as they may directly experience true Beauty itself. All Souls experience pleasure, joy, wonder, and delight at both the sensed and contemplative Beauties. Those who are especially moved by Beauty are what we call Lovers (See Notes on Ennead One, Third Tractate, Section 2).

#### **1.6.5      Beauty of the Soul and Ugliness of the Soul**

Let us examine more closely the Lover of the incorporeal Beauties. What is it that they experience when they witness a skillful practitioner, Moral Virtue, and other manners of Beauty perceptible only to the Soul itself? What is it that they experience when they witness such Beauty inside of themselves? What is the nature of the euphoric and excited state they experience? Why do they yearn to transcend their physical bodies and unite with this higher order realm of the Beautiful?

Such experiences can only be of the Soul which experiences genuine love. After all, no shape, color, size, proportion or other visual queue can incite such feelings. Being metaphysical and incorporeal, the causes of these feelings are necessarily colorless, shapeless, and sizeless. They are, in a word, invisible. These experiences

can be the direct experience of Wisdom and Virtue by the Soul itself, purely within the realm of the Intellectual. It is the Intellectual recognition of Wisdom and Virtue in oneself, and in other people that evokes such feelings. Whether it is Justice, Temperance, or Courage, we all experience and recognize the Virtues. Anyone who experiences the Virtues directly must concede that they are Beautiful. Such Virtues of the Soul are complete and encapsulate their own Essence. Since they do not require a material medium or matter to present themselves, we can say that they have Real Being (i.e. their Being is not dependent on some other thing. They have Being in of themselves.). As we have previously discussed, sensed objects are only Beautiful via their participation in the Ideal Forms (i.e. the Real Beings themselves). The Essences, the Ideal Forms, the Real Beings are Beautiful in of themselves.

It remains to be explained rationally why the experience of such Real Beings evokes the sensations of excitement and delight within us. To investigate this relationship, let us explore the things contrary to the Beautiful (i.e. Ugly things). If we can discern that which makes something Ugly, we can use this to apophatically deduce some things about Beauty.

Let us imagine an Ugly soul. They are Unjust and do not think before they act. They have no Prudence or Temperance. They are ruled by their bodily whims and passions. They have no Courage, and cowardly avoid bodily harm at any cost. Lacking Wisdom, they seek only temporary and material things. Physical pleasure and bodily satisfaction dominate their desires. They selfishly think of only themselves. They are endlessly Envious of every good fortune experienced by anyone else. Worst of all, they are completely satisfied by and even proud of their vile impurity.

The cause of such Ugliness can only be impurity of the Soul. Corrupted by a taste for the material and physical, they are distracted from the things which naturally exist within the realm of the Soul by things which are foreign to the realm of the Soul. The Soul becomes weighed down by these material and physical desires, and the Soul ultimately loses sight of the metaphysical all together. The most impure of Souls ironically only focus on the temporal and physical Matter. The cause of this distraction can only be the result of the coupling of the Soul and the Body. It is by this connection that the Soul can develop a distracting taste for the material. Consequently, the Soul corrupted can only redeem itself by a process of purification. By purifying itself of the material and physical, the Soul can return to its primitive, pure, and default state of metaphysical, Intellectual contemplation.

The Soul becomes Ugly via its mingling with the Body. In this interaction, the Soul becomes distracted. Eventually, the Soul become so confused that it mistakes the Body for itself. Ugliness of the Soul is a result of impurity, just like the Ugliness of a piece of Gold can stem from the specs of impure elements within it. Just as Ugly Gold may be restored to its proper, Beautiful state by the removal of such impurities, the Ugly Soul may be restored to its proper, Beautiful state by the removal of its Bodily-focused impurities. The Soul regains its Beauty by removing from itself the things which have a nature foreign to it.

#### **1.6.6      Beauty as Purity, Ugliness as Impurity**

It is for these reasons that Empedocles and Plato both said that that Courage, Temperance, Prudence, and indeed all of the Virtues are purifications. It is for these reasons that the Eleusinian Mysteries teach that those who have not been purified before their death will sink to the swampy bottom of Hades' underworld. The impure

enjoy impurity itself. The filthy find their joy in foulness, like dirty pigs delighted as they bathe in mud. If Temperance involves divorcing oneself from the passions of the body, does this not imply that to be ruled by the body is impure? If Courage is to overcome the fear of death (i.e. separation from the body), does it not imply that to covet the safety of the body is impure? If we are to value Magnanimity, does this not imply that ultimately the petty dealings of the material world are not worth our attention? In Prudence, we find great Wisdom in thinking before we act, and in general holding the Intellectual as superior to the whims of our emotions and bodily desires. In detaching oneself from the impurities of the material, the purified Soul becomes harmonized with the things which share its fundamental nature. In detaching itself from the material, the Soul can return to its primordial nature as an incorporeal Essence, an immaterial Ideal Form which resides in the realm of the Divine. The purified Soul resides within the realm of the sources of Beauty itself.

The Purified Soul then necessarily becomes supremely Beautiful. After all, the Intellectual Essences and Ideal Forms are the Beauty of the Soul. They share the same nature. Thus, as the Soul becomes harmonized with Beauty itself, the Soul ascends to Divinity itself. This is because all Beauty comes from the Divine. The higher the Soul ascends, the more Good it becomes.

From this we can see that the Real Beings are Beautiful, and the non-Beings are Ugly. For Goodness, Fulness, and Beauty are the same. Matter, only ever encompassing a small portion of an Ideal Form, and always dependent on something else for its own existence, is thus Ugly and Evil. Goodness and Beauty, as well as Ugliness and Evil exist along the same continuum. They may be judged using the same methods.

And so we can define Beauty and Ugliness as follows. On this continuum, we necessarily begin with The One, which is completely Full, completely Good, and Completely Beautiful. From The One, once distinctions start being made, we end up in Nous, the realm of all things Intellectual. These Intellectual Beings then birth Soul, and make the Soul Beautiful. It is then the Soul which brings Beauty to all things beneath it. The Soul brings Beauty into the material realm by shaping things as much as is possible to resemble the higher order Ideal Forms and Essences. As things descend further from The One, they become less Beautiful and more Evil. Only by ascending back to the One can lower order things become Beautiful and Good again. The Material finds Beauty in Soul, the Soul finds Beauty in Intellect, and Intellect finds Beauty in The One.

### **1.6.7            Ascension to The One Is The Supreme Goal of All**

We must then discuss The One, The Good which every Soul desires. This Good is unmistakably Beautiful to any and all who have experienced it. Unlike material desires, to desire The Good is Good itself. Such Good is only attainable to those who ascend upwards towards it. To do so, we seek our primordial nature by discarding the things foreign to us. The things which we have become encumbered with on our decent to the material. This is reflected in the Eleusinian Mysteries, where the appointed purify themselves by removing their clothing. They ultimately pass by all that is foreign to them until they reach The Oneness and simplicity of The Good itself. This pure Oneness is the unification of all things by the revocation of all concepts of otherness and distinction. This Good, this Oneness is the most primordial principle of Being which all things participate in, and without which noting could be thought about or spoken of. Everything which Exists participates in Being (see Parmenides poem). Within the context of Being itself, everything exists. Intellect Exists, Soul Exists, and (as a consequence) Life exists as well. How could the realization that everything Physical and Metaphysical is unified into this One

not evoke a desire for harmony? How could such a harmonization not evoke the highest pleasure?

It is even possible for those who have not grasped The One to desire it as Good. For those who have grasped it, they are transformed and filled with feelings of love and delight. Such a transformed person understands that lesser loves cannot compare, and has no desire for the things foreign to them which they previously held as Beautiful. Those who have grasped The One are like those who have directly experienced the Gods. They are forever transformed, and unable to view the world and cosmos the same again.

Such an experience of completely pure Beauty reveals the inferiority of everything else. The One is the most singular and primordial. It is the only thing which is not contingent upon anything else. For even the Divine and the Gods are contingent on The One.

The One is thus the unmoved mover. It remains impassible while providing everything for all things which come after it. Yet in spite of all it provides, it is never reduced or diminished. The One, as the primary Beauty, grants Beauty to everything else. Yet nothing can increase its Beauty. In doing so, The One allows everything else to love and be lovable.

Thus, the pursuit of The Good, The One must be the ultimate goal of all Souls. It is the goal which is deserving of our entire effort. Those who can grasp it are truly blessed, and those who cannot are ultimately denied of Beauty and pleasure. An experience of The One is so valuable, it renders everything else worthless. There is no misfortune in anything except to fail in grasping The One. To possess an entire kingdom, the entire Earth, or even the heavens themselves cannot compare to a direct experience of Beauty itself.

#### **1.6.8      Souls Must Flee the Material To Experience Beauty**

How can we go about experiencing this Divine Beauty which is foreign to our sensory perceptions? In the Mysteries, Divinity is out of sight in the recess of a sanctuary, reflecting how our senses are insufficient to perceive true Beauty. In light of this problem, is there are technique or skill we can leverage to gain an experience of Beauty?

Since our sense perceptions are insufficient as a means to perceive Beauty, they are of no use in such a pursuit. In fact, they may only be of hindrance. Since anything which can be perceived by the senses is not true Beauty, the things we perceive with our mere senses can only serve as distractions. Even the perception of Beautiful material bodies is a distraction. A body can only ever possess a small portion of the Beauty which it is a variant manifestation of (i.e. which it is an image of). To seek Beauty in an object is like trying to grasp at something reflected in a pool of water. The source of the image reflected in the water is not itself in the water. We are reminded of the fate of Narcissus, who famously fell into the water and was swept away while attempting to grasp at a reflection of Beauty. Such is the fate of the Soul which holds onto material beauty. Such a Soul is dragged downwards by the material objects they hold onto.

Given this, we must do the opposite. We must flee from the realm of the material if we ever wish to see anything truly Beautiful. Just as Odysseus fled from the appetizing feast offered by Circe and fled also from the enchanting song and dance of Calypso. Odysseus was Wise, and ultimately realized that such sensual pleasures could not

truly satisfy him. Such is the case for all Human Beings. True Happiness lies in the Intellectual realm of Nous (and above), not in the material world.

How then do we flee from this material world full of traps for our sensory faculties? We cannot flee by foot or any other form of physical movement. After all, we are not fleeing to anywhere on Earth. To flee, we must close our eyes, and engage a way of experiencing things which everyone possesses, but few attempts.

### **1.6.9      How to Experience Beauty Directly**

What is the nature of this way of experiencing things which does not rely on our physical senses? How can we train ourselves to use it? How can we ultimately experience Beauty directly?

At first, pure Beauty is impossible to see, as though it were too dazzling for the untrained eye to bare. To train themselves initially, one must first properly experience the Beauty of the lower realms. First one must train to appreciate the noblest occupations and pursuits taken up by Human Beings. From there, one must train to appreciate Beauty in the various Good deeds and accomplishments of the noble and Virtuous. After this, one may at last learn to appreciate the Beauty in the essence (e.g. Soul) of these Virtuous people themselves. Each step in this process serves as the foundation for the next. Understanding noble occupations and pursuits allows you to appreciate the resulting consequences of these occupations and pursuits. Understanding the Good consequences which result from Virtuous actions allows someone to distill the Good nature within Virtuous people itself.

How can we experience the Beauty inherent within a Virtuous Soul?

To do so, we must look internally and learn to identify the Beauty in Virtuous people with whatever Beauty exists within ourselves. If someone does not find Beauty within themselves, they must refine themselves to bring it out. To refine the Beauty in oneself, one must mimic the methods of a sculptor. Sculptors reveal the Beauty in a statue by slowly chipping away at the material that they sculpt. By removing material in the right places, polishing rough edges, and smoothing out course patches, the sculptor slowly reveals the Beautiful statue within the material. Such is the path for refinement of the Soul. By removing the parts of ourselves which are superfluous, casting out the darkness within us, and straightening out the parts of ourselves which are crooked, we can refine the Beauty that is naturally ours to begin with. With ceaseless perseverance, we may improve ourselves slowly. The purifying pursuit of Virtue within ourselves will lead us to reflect Divine Temperance, Courage, and Prudence through ourselves.

When we have at last achieved a Virtuous life, we have succeeded in casting out that which is foreign to our true selves. No longer bound by the limitations of the physical, the Virtuous will know what it means to say that true light and Goodness transcends that which can be measured. Incommensurable with all physical limitations, the purified Soul reaches out to infinitely. Dwelling entirely within its own nature, the purified Soul becomes the very thing which it has been striving to see. If someone has achieved this state, it is impossible for them to doubt it. No guide may assist them any further. All that is left is to strain and experience oneself. When the purified Soul can experience itself directly, it has consequently experienced true Beauty.

This is the only way a Soul may Experience Beauty directly. A Soul blighted by impurity, weakness, and vice can never experience such Beauty, even if it is pointed out to them directly. To experience something, the faculty for perceiving it must be commensurable with it. An eye must possess a nature similar to light for the light to have a means to interact with it (i.e. light must be able to bounce off our retina for us to perceive it). Thus, Plato teaches that the eye is the most similar of the sense instruments to the Sun. Such is the case for Beauty and the Soul. A Soul must become Beautiful in order to share a nature with Beauty and perceive it directly.

To do so, first a Soul must engage in Intellectual reasoning and determine the Beauty of the Ideal Forms and Essences. In doing so, a Soul will understand that all Beauty lies in the Intellectual. This is because all things are Beautiful via their participation in the Intellectual Ideal Forms and Essences. Above the Intellectual is The Good or The One itself. All of the Beauty in the Intellectual is in turn derived from The Good itself. Being the most full and complete, The Good is the primary Beauty. The Ideal Forms and Nous represent the sphere of Intellectual Beauty. The Good itself transcends the Intellectual (as there are no distinctions to be made at the level of The Good or The One). As a result, all Intellectual Beauty is then Beautiful via its reflection of the ultimate fulness of The Good itself. Thus, all Beauty ultimately is derived from The Good, The One itself. To seek such Beauty is the ultimate goal of all Souls.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Seventh Tractate - The Primordial Good

### 1.7.1      All Things Aspire to The Good

For any given thing, the Good for it must be to actualize its unique natural function (Arete). Who could argue otherwise? For things which are compound, made of multiple parts, each part may have its own natural function. In this case, it is the natural function of this thing's most unique and capable part which sets the standard for the Goodness of overarching whole. Put another way, a compound thing must be judged by its most capable unique faculty.

Since the natural function of the Soul is to Unite itself with Goodness, and since the primary act of a Soul is to direct itself towards Goodness, it follows that the actions of the Soul inherently fulfil its natural function. For this reason, the acts of the Soul are Good of a self-contained variety. The soul automatically achieves its natural function in every act. While the Soul is naturally perfect at achieving its natural function, other things are inherently imperfect. Most things must do many acts which are not their natural function in order to eventually achieve it. For example, the Goodness of a House is contingent upon other concepts, arriving at Goodness transitively. A Good House must keep out the elements. In order to keep out the elements, it must have a roof. A Good House must have room for people in side. In order to keep people inside, it needs to be of a certain size. There are many things which a House is contingent upon to achieve its Good.

Since the Soul perfectly achieves its proper function directly via its acts (i.e. with no intermediary steps), it follows that there are no further intermediary steps the Soul must go through to reach this Good. The Good it reaches this way is simple and irreducible. What could be complicated about something without contingencies based on anything outside of itself? Since the Good which the Soul directs itself towards is simple, irreducible Goodness (as opposed to something contingent on other things, such as the example of the House needing to resist the elements and hold people), it follows then that this Good which the Soul directs itself towards is the most primordial, highest order The Good. After all, it is the most real, full Good which can possibly exist due to the fact that it is contingent on nothing outside of itself. It is Good in of itself.

From this, we can see that there is a distinction between Goodness in of itself, and things which participate in Goodness but contingently rely on other actions and concepts. Put another way, there is the principle of The Good, and on the other hand there are things which participate in this principle of The Good. One is the principle, and the other are, in a sense, attributes of this principle. One type is the all-encompassing Ideal Form, the other type is variant manifestations of that principle. The relationship is similar to the principle of Redness, and individual Red objects. The Good, then, is the principle which all things strive for via the completion of their natural functions. Everything else may participate in The Good via the completion of their respective natural functions. These completed natural functions are thus variant manifestations of The Good.

There are two possible ways to participate in this ultimate Good. One way is to take actions which transitively result in Good (i.e. complete natural functions to cause variant manifestations of Good). The other way is to become qualitatively like it (i.e. to harmonize or assimilate with it). If all actions and desires

are judged to be Good (or not) by reference to this ultimate principle of The Good, then this ultimate principle of The Good must be completely self contained. What Good can The Good be judged by but itself? If there is ever some other point of reference we are using to judge the Goodness of something we believe to be the ultimate Good, then in fact that other point of reference would be the ultimate The Good.

We can ultimately know which things are principles (sometimes called Real Beings) and which are variant manifestations (sometimes called Non-Beings) by seeing if they rely on other things for their existence. Consider a light source, an obstructing object, and a resulting shadow. The shadow will cease to exist if either the light source or the obstructing object are removed. The obstructing object and the light source, however, do not rely on each other for existence. The obstructing object and light source can then be thought of as more real than the shadow. The fewer things outside of itself something relies upon, the more real the thing is. Consequently, the most real thing must rely on nothing else but itself.

Since all things aspire to The Good via their natural functions and attempts to complete them, then it follows that The Good is foundational to all actions and things. All things have natural functions, and therefore all things aspire to The Good. These natural functions and their resulting Good are then like shadows, contingent upon The Good for their existence. Since all things make various acts, the things and their acts are contingent upon and beneath The Good. Since thinking is an act, The Good even transcends Intellect. Ultimately, The Good must be the most primordial thing, as all things otherwise are reliant upon it for their very existence. How could some thing exist without a natural function? How could a natural function exist without reference to The Good?

The Good must then be impassible, imparting all things with Goodness, but never being diminished or becoming contingent upon anything else in the process. Like rays from the sun, or the radii of a circle from its center, all things ultimately point back to The Good. Just as the sun is always present with its rays, The Good is always present with all things.

### **1.7.2                  All Things Participate in The Good**

Let us further examine how all things are connected to The Good. It is said that Matter aspires to Soul, Soul aspires to Nous (Intellect), and Intellect aspires to The Good. Put another way, material things participates in Ideal Forms. Via participation in Ideal Forms, things complete natural functions (judged by how fully they participate in their Ideal Forms) and ultimately participate in The Good. Thus, everything which Exists participates in The Good, at least transitively. The Good then unifies all things which Exist together. It is the only thing which all things participate in. For this reason, it can be seen that The Good and The One are the same. It also follows that all things are thus mere images, or variant manifestations of The Good. For each broad category of things which Exist, their immediate Good is to participate in their respective Ideal Form. For living things, it is to participate in Life. For Ideal Forms, it is to participating in the Ideal Form of Ideal Forms (i.e. The Intellectual Principle of Ideal Forms or the Ideal Form of Intellectual Principles). It follows then that a living thing which also contemplates Ideal Forms participates in both Life (through living) and the Ideal Form of Ideal Forms (through contemplation of the Ideal Forms). This constitutes two links to the Good, or a double Good.

### 1.7.3

### Life and Death, Evil and Good

Since participation in Life is Good, does it follow that there is good for all living things? No, to Fully obtain the Good which Life offers, a living thing must participate in Life fully. Life which also has Evil (see notes on Ennead One, Sixth Tractate, Section 6) present does not Fully participate in Life. A Life with Evil present is like an eye which is damaged and cannot see properly. It is ultimately unable to complete its natural function properly, and therefore cannot fully possess its respective Good.

This raises another question. Life is the coupling of Soul and Body, and thus of Soul and Matter. Since Matter is fundamentally Evil, then Life must at least be in part Evil due to the Matter involved. In spite of this fact, Life is also at least partly Good given that it involves the fulfilment (even if only partially) of natural functions. Since Life is ultimately at least partly Good, then should we say that Death is necessarily Evil?

To answer this question, we must ask for whom we mean Death is Evil for. Evil is of course an attribute, and is thus contingent upon a subject for its existence. With regards to Evil and Life, if the Life has ceased (i.e. Death), then there is no longer a subject for the Evil to belong to. The Life of a stone cannot possibly be Evil, because a stone does not possess Life to begin with.

What about the existence of the Soul, which can persist after separation from the body via Death? Such an existence still has a natural function, and still may engage in acts. Therefore, there is at least some Good present in an incorporeal existence. In fact, such an existence would be even more Good than a Life tied to a material body. A disembodied Soul does not face the impediments which come with a Body when engaging in its characteristic acts. If a Soul assimilates with the World Soul, the most complete Soul which encompasses all others, then it could only be more Good than it would be as an individual Soul. Due to the fact that the World Soul resides completely within the Intellectual realm of Nous (as opposed to Individual souls which typically couple with lesser things such as Matter), there can be no Evil present. After all, Nous is completely transcendent to all Matter. This is the very reason that the gods possess Good, but no Evil.

In fact, not only does Death not entail Evil, but it is Life which entails evil. Only by coupling with a material body can a Soul possess Life. Consequently, in finding Life, a soul becomes impure. From then on, Evil is present by definition. Even if Life suffers during its Afterlife in Hades, such suffering belongs to the Life due to its inherent impurity. In Death, if the Soul can separate from its Body, it will only find Good in regaining its purity.

The reason for this confusion comes from the notion that Life is Good. In fact, Life is only Good for those who become Good. Life becomes Good via the purifying Virtues. In pursuing Virtue, Life pursues the natural function of the Soul (i.e. Union with The Good). It is possibility for the completion of this natural function which gives Life the potential for Good. However, the fulfilment of this potential is not guaranteed. The Soul, when purified, automatically fulfils its natural function via its acts. As a result, the Soul achieves its Good as soon as it separates from the material.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Eighth Tractate - On the Origin and Nature of Evil

### 1.8.1

#### **The Problems With Understanding Evil**

What is the origin of Evil? What types of things become afflicted by Evil? To answer these sorts of questions, we must first define what Evil actually is. What, then, is the nature of Evil? If we can discern the nature of Evil, we can discover where its origins are, what is susceptible to it, and if it has Real Being (i.e. whether or not it is contingent upon other things).

Which faculty of ours can help us discern the nature of Evil? This is not an easy question to answer. We generally understand the nature of different things by abstracting their characteristics to a broader concept (i.e. an Ideal Form or Intellectual Principle). Yet how can there be an Ideal Form of Evil? After all, we have previously discerned that the realm of Ideal Forms, the Intellectual Realm of Nous, contains Good but no Evil. (see notes on Ennead One, Seventh Tractate, Section 3). Does not Evil imply the exact opposite (i.e. the absence of Good and the presence of Evil)? The Soul is able to know the Ideal Forms because they are of the same quality as it is. Since Evil is not of the same quality as Soul, what medium can be used by the Soul to reach an understanding of Evil?

We have previously determined that Good and Evil can be discerned using the same methods (see notes on Ennead One, Sixth Tractate, Section Six). As a result, it stands to reason that knowing about the nature of Good will also allow someone to have knowledge of Evil as well. Consequently, we can make progress on understanding the nature of Evil via inquiry into the nature of Good. Since Good is by definition more primordial than Evil (and everything else at that), we are able to start our inquiry into Good without needing to inquire about to any contingent prerequisites (see notes on Ennead One, Seventh Tractate, Section 2).

We can already see the beginnings of some facts about Good and Evil. Good and Evil must exist in some relationship to one another. Good must be a principle with Real Being, while Evil is a privation of it, contingent upon it for existence (i.e. not a Real Being). These relationships will be discussed further in future sections.

### 1.8.2

#### **The Ontological Hierarchy of The Good**

Now we must discuss the nature of Good, at least to the degree which is necessary for the current inquiry on Evil. As discussed in earlier tractates, all things participates in Ideal Forms. Via participation in Ideal Forms, things complete their natural functions (judged by how fully they participate in their Ideal Forms) and consequently realize their own individual Good. All things have natural functions they should be attempting to fulfil. Consequently, all things have the potential to fulfil natural functions. Thus, everything which Exists participates in The Good, at least transitively. The Good then unifies all things which Exist together. This is because the existence of a natural function implies a possibility for the realization of an individual thing's Good. Since the Good for any thing is for it to fulfil its natural function, every thing which exists has a potential to achieve its own individual Good. Since everything possess at least the potential for Good, then, it follows that everything in the cosmos is logically contingent upon an overarching principle of The Good to participate in (or not). Since everything participates (to some degree or another, even if only in terms of potential) in this overarching Good, it must therefore be completely self-sufficient. After all, there can be no concept ontologically above The Good. Any concept above it would simultaneously be contingent upon The Good, but also a necessary prerequisite for it (given the fact that all things participate in The Good, if only potentially). Of course, to be both a prerequisite for something and also contingent upon it is an absurdity (see notes on Ennead One, Seventh Tractate). If all things are contingent upon The Good, it follows that the principle of Existence, the principle of all things Intellectual (i.e. Nous), all acts of Intellectual reasoning, Soul, and Life itself are also contingent on it.

Beauty is defined as participation in the Intellectual (see notes on Ennead One, Sixth Tractate, Section 6). Then

even Beauty is ontologically beneath The Good. The Good is then, in a sense, above and beyond Beauty. It is above and beyond pure Intellect (i.e. Nous). Pure Intellect is in turn above and beyond that which we refer to as the Intellectual part of the Human Soul (i.e. the Intellectual Soul), which is only able to reach a small part of the Intellectual realm via extensive use of discursive reasoning (i.e. the Reasoning Soul), and only after much training and effort to parse out the raw sensory experiences we receive (i.e. the Unreasoning Soul).

The Principle of Intelligence (i.e. Nous) has no need for experience or deduction. It is already full and inclusive of all things Intellectual. On the contrary, Human Beings begin with nothing and must work their way up to the Intellectual. The Intellectual does not possess all Intellectual things (i.e. Ideal Forms) in the connotative sense. Rather, each Intellectual thing is a part of the Intellectual itself. Each Ideal Form is then not separated from any other Ideal Form. They are all merely subsections, variant manifestations of the principle of the Intellectual. Put another way, Ideal Forms are distinct within, not from the Intellectual. Just as our hands and feet are distinctions within, not apart from our bodies.

The Intellectual is the first emanation from The Good. As a result, the Intellectual makes up the medium or substance which all other things further down the line of emanation consist in and are dependent upon. After all, everything beneath The Good and the principle of the Intellectual (i.e. Nous, The Ideal Form of Ideal Forms, or the Intellectual Principle of Intellectual Principles) participates in various Ideal Forms and are thus contingent upon them in the same way that everything is contingent upon The Good.

The Intellectual then emanates the All Soul. The nature of Soul is to contemplate and participate in individual Ideal Forms (as opposed to the entirety of Nous itself). As such, a Soul does not encapsulate all Ideal Forms. It must abstract the nature of Nous via the individual Ideal Forms which make up Nous. Soul is then contingent upon Nous, in the same way the Nous is contingent upon The Good. Consequently, the Soul may only get a glimpse at The Good transitively via Nous.

If we stop our descent here, and only consider The Good, Nous, and Soul, we find a blissful collection. Here reside the Divine beings. This is the realm of the Gods. Evil is not yet present. From here, we can see that there are three categories which are purely Good. Good of the Soul, Good of the Intellectual, and The Good itself. All Good is derived from The Good itself. The Intellectual Good is derived from the principle of Intellection, or the Essence of the Intellectual (i.e. Nous). Good of the Soul, in turn, is derived from the principle of Soul (i.e. the All Soul).

### **1.8.3      The Nature of Evil**

If the cosmos were limited to Intellectual Beings and that which is above and beyond them, there would be no Evil at all. After all, these are all among the three categories of Good as defined in the previous section. This is the realm of the Real Beings. Since Evil does not exist there, then it follows that Evil, if it exists in any sense at all, must reside in the realm of the Non Real Beings (i.e. things which are contingent upon the Real Beings). It must either reside with Non Real Beings, mingle with them, or be a modality that Non Real Beings can engage in.

This term Non Real Beings, sometimes referred to as Non-Being, can be confusing. It is not meant to imply that something does not exist in any way shape or form at all. Non Real Beings can be referred to connotatively. This type of non-reality is also different from perception based illusions, such as the appearance of rest or motion is something when in fact the opposite is true. Rather, the relationship between Real Beings and Non Real Beings is like that of light sources and shadows. It is a matter of contingency, or being self contained. A light source is not contingent upon a shadow for its existence. Plenty of light sources exist without shadows when they are not currently producing light. Yet there are no shadows which exist without a light source providing light (and further some object obstructing the light). Shadows are like Non Real Beings. We can speak of them, and even refer to particular shadows, but they are not real things in themselves. They are always contingent upon other things.

Many things are Non Real Beings in actuality. All objects of our sense perceptions are Non Real Beings, relying on our particular sensory faculties and our brain to interpret them. What we see, smell, and hear are merely representations which our faculties generate for us. All of these things are posterior to and contingent upon many other things, which is ultimately the hallmark of Non Real Being.

Since Evil cannot reside in the Realm of Real Beings, it must reside (or be in some way affiliated with) the realm of Non Real Beings. Since Non Real Beings are defined as not having a self contained existence, we can see that Evil must be intrinsic to this lack of self contained existence. Evil then is this state of being which has no properties of its own. It is always relying on something else for its defining features. Just as the shape and size of a shadow are not properties of the shadow, but rather consequences of the properties of the light source and the object obstructing it. The shadow relies on the object obstructing the light source for its shape. It depends on the angle at which the light source is relative to the obstructing object for its location. It relies on the brightness of the light source and the opacity of the obstructing object for its particular shade. The shadow has none of these things in of itself. As such, things are not Evil essentially, but rather are Evil via their lack of properties of their own.

What then is the substance of Evil? Since things can become Evil without being essentially Evil, Evil must exist in some manner outside of the things which become Evil. After all, The Good must exist outside of any particular Good which some individual thing may possess. How, then, can we have something like a property of not having any properties?

Some might object and argue that there can be no such thing. What can be said about a lack of having properties apart from a specific thing which lacks properties? Yet we have no issues talking about properties themselves without reference to something which has that property. For example, we can speak of Justice and Temperance without reference to a Just and Tempered person. Consequently, we can speak about lacking properties without needing reference to something which lacks properties.

The solution is that there can be a principle of lacking properties. Normal principles (i.e. Ideal Forms) are full, encompassing all possible manifestations of something. This principle of formlessness, as it were, is then the opposite. It is perfectly lacking in any essences or properties of its own. It is infinitely formless and empty of defined traits. This is the principle of Evil. Things, then, becomes Evil via their likeness to this principle. Things become Evil by lacking defined properties of their own.

#### **1.8.4                    Evil of the Soul**

It is the nature of Material bodies to be Evil. Since they have at least some semblance of form (usually shape if nothing else), they are not primordial Evil itself. Their individual Evils are then secondary, contingent upon and resulting from their resemblance to the previously defined primordial principle of Evil. Yet the form of a Material body is always extremely limited, at best resembling just one variant manifestation of category of a shape, and usually the resemblance is poor due to many deformities, cracks, and missing pieces. Has anyone ever seen a physically perfect Tringle (even down to the microscopic level)? Far from anything eternal, material bodies naturally reshape, decay and break apart in the course of their very existence and interaction with other material bodies. Without a Soul, they are Lifeless, and cannot even strive towards the Good.

As such, when a Soul couples with a Material body, it is introduced to such Evils. Such a coupled body becomes an impediment to the natural goals of the Soul. Yet the Ideal Form of Souls is not Evil, and neither are Individual Souls. Then what can we say about Evils of the Soul?

According to Plato, an Evil Soul is enslaved to its Material body. Of the parts of the Soul (see notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 1), it is the Unreasoning Soul which is naturally prone to Evil. Lacking any capacity for reason, it uncritically accepts the information it receives via the senses and emotions. Using its own

sensations and feelings, it passes judgment on the Good or Evil of other things based purely on how immediately gratifying or difficult they are. Such an unreasoned process readily gives rise to illusions. It causes things which are Good, but difficult, to appear as Evil. It causes things which are Evil, but pleasurable to the senses and emotions, to appear as Good.

What gives rise to Evil of the Soul?

First of all, a Soul only gains sense perceptions and emotions via its coupling with a Material body (see notes on Ennead One, First Tractate, Section 7). By coupling with a body, the Soul necessarily becomes coupled with aspects of Evil. Since Evil implies a lack of self contained existence, this coupling of Soul and Body necessarily degrades the Soul and weakens its ties to the self contained existence of things Divine. This degradation ultimately manifests as diminished capabilities. The passions and desires of the body weaken the Soul's ability to reason (i.e. the Reasoning Soul). The body distracts the Soul and compels it towards material considerations of hunger, lust, and greed. Further, such bodily compulsions incline the Soul towards temporal and particular circumstances. In doing so, the Soul loses its ability to perceive the Ideal Forms and Essences. Thus, even the Intellectual Soul is weakened in the coupling of Soul and Matter. Who has time to contemplate the nature of Triangles when driven to fashion a single triangular spear point? In general, the Evil of the material penetrates into things which are foreign to it and occupies their focus.

The purified Soul is then defined by the opposite. Not distracted by material passions and desires, it is able to think clearly and reason accurately. It is focused on the Ideal Forms and concepts, granting it the ability to behave appropriately in spite of the particular circumstances that the body finds itself in.

The Evil Soul turns away from the Divine. By identifying with imperfect Material things, it loses its perfection. By losing sight of its Essence, it becomes but a shadow to its Eternal self. The Evil Soul slowly loses all of its properties. It is defined by the Non Real Beings, the contingent variant manifestations which define its Material body. The truly Evil Soul sees itself as merely a Material body.

### **1.8.5            Evil Is Not Inherent to the Soul**

If Evil of the Soul is then a lack of Good within the Soul, does it follow that Evil is a natural property of the Soul? After all, every single Soul is lacking of The Good in some way shape or form. Only The Good itself is fully Good. If this were true, it would also follow that Evil has its seat above and beyond the realm of Matter.

In short, no. The confusion here arises from the notion that Evil is merely any lack of Good in the Soul. Rather, Evil is an absolute lacking of Good. A Soul which is in some way lacking of the totality of The Good still may possess its own individual Good via the completion of its natural function.

Matter, on the other hand, is completely lacking in Good. It has nothing of its own. It has no natural shape, it has no natural properties, and it has no natural functions. Everything which can be said of Matter is always contingent upon something higher. Its features are always a reflection of its current accidental form, and not something inherent to it. It is this lack of inherent properties that prevent it from having even an individual Good. What could the natural function of something which has no properties even be? This is what it means to be a Non Real Being. True Evil is then this complete lack of anything inherent.

To lack some Good is to merely be deficient. Put another way, to lack some Good is to be not Good. True Evil requires a complete lack of any Good, even in terms of potential. Yet to lack some Good, or to be not Good,

does entail some presence of an Evil or lack of properties. The more something lacks Good, the more readily it loses the remaining Good it has. Though such a lack of Good may not be Pure Evil, it is certainly on the path towards Pure Evil.

Principle Evil is thus not any particular thing we might refer to as Evil. It is not any particular injustice, vice, or negative characteristic. Evil is a principle distinct from any of its variant manifestations. These instances of individual Evils have some semblance of their own properties at least. After all, we can differentiate and categorize particular instances of Evil. For example, with regard to particular Evils of the Soul, we can identify the particular matter which the Soul has coupled with, which parts of the Soul are afflicted, or by the bodily faculties which are involved.

What can be said of things which are external to the Soul, but also commonly referred to as Evil? What can be said, for example, of poverty and sickness?

Both poverty and sickness are always related to Matter in some way. Sickness refers to a disordered body. The body either lacks nutrition, contains germs or poisons in excess of what it can tolerate, or its constituent parts are not arranged according to their proper form. Poverty implies a lack of what someone needs. Yet these are the needs of the Material body, such as food, water, and shelter. To the degree which sickness and poverty afflict us, they do so by means of the Material body we are coupled to.

Given this, we can see then that Evil is not something inherent to us, but rather is something external and outside of us. Such Evil has been present before we came into Existence. It afflicts us against our will and best interests. Those who are tenacious and Wise seek deliverance from this Evil, but not all people have the strength to achieve it.

Evil is not an inherent property of Human Beings. Like the Sun and Stars (i.e. the sensible Gods which are both material and free from Evil), some people are able to exist in their Material bodies and overcome their wickedness. Some people are born with such a low drive for the material pleasures that there is hardly any vice for them to overcome in the first place. In all cases, such self mastery is achieved via the parts of the Human Soul which are not bound up in Matter.

#### **1.8.6      The Incommensurability of Good and Evil**

Given our discussion this far, how can we account for Plato's teachings that Evil cannot ever be completely destroyed, and that Evil exists (in a manner of speaking) out of necessity? Further, why is it that Evil has no place within the Divine, but is ever-present in the mortal realm of Material things?

Does Plato mean to say that the Divine is completely without Evil, existing purely? Don't the motions of the Sun and Stars exist perfectly, go about their motions and existence according to their purpose, and never partake of any injustice, disorder, or wrongs of any kind? Evil things are reserved for the mortal realm of the Material, down here on Earth. When Plato beckons us to flee the Material, is it this Earthly material realm we must flee from?

When Plato speaks of fleeing from the Material realm, he does not mean that we are supposed to somehow remove ourselves from Earth. We need not flee from some physical location. Rather, we are supposed to flee from Evil no matter where we are. We are supposed to be Virtuous, even in our physical bodies. We do so by exemplifying Justice, Piety, and Wisdom. The Vices of the body are the Evils of this realm which we are supposed to flee from. To a dissenter within the Platonic Dialogs who argues that Evil can be destroyed if all of humanity were persuaded to Virtue, Socrates would reply that this is impossible. Good and Evil are absolute contraries, and exist in relationship to one another. If there is Good, then there necessarily is Evil as its contrary.

If vice in Human Beings constitutes Evil in Human Beings, how can we account for the notion that Evil is the contrary of Good? After all, the actions and dispositions of Human Beings cannot be the literal contrary of The Good. The misconception here is the mistaken notion that Vice and Good are contraries, which is not the case. Vice is the contrary of Virtue. Vice and Virtue are not Principle Good or Principle Evil. Rather, they are the variant manifestations of Good and Evil which exist in as contraries within Human Beings.

How can there be a contrary to The Good itself, which is beyond Being and has no peers of the same quality? Further, just because two things are contraries to each other, does the presence of one really necessitate the presence of another? For example, given that the state of being healthy exists, there is a contrary state of being unhealthy which exists. It is technically possible for everyone to be healthy and for no one to be unhealthy in actuality. While quite unlikely, there is no inherent contradiction or absurdity in such a situation.

For one, Plato does not necessarily argue that for every single set of contrary things, they must both exist and be present. He does, however, argue that this is the case for The Good and Principle Evil. This at least avoids any contradictions when examples such as health and unhealth arise.

We are still left with our other question. How can there be a contrary to The Good itself? After all, The Good is beyond Being and transcends existence.

It can be seen via induction that some Essences and Ideal Forms cannot have an opposite or contrary. But what about the case for the most Universal Ideal Form? What could be contrary to the Universal Essence of Being (i.e. The Good)? Clearly, it would have to be The Universal Essence of Non Being. This is the Principle of Evil. The Principle of The Good is perfectly complete (encompassing everything which exists). The Principle of Evil is perfectly incomplete (consisting in the principle of having no real existence at all). They are completely opposed in every way on every possible front. Their contrary natures exemplify the greatest possible opposition two contraries may be in. Good and Evil are contrary to the limit. It is also the perfection of their contrariness which defines both of their existences. The nature of The Good naturally defines the negative outline of Evil as it perfectly fills out all Existence.

Other contraries at least share something. Perhaps it is that they are both Ideal Forms, or perhaps both of them are at least partly seated in Real Being. In the case of the Universal Contraries, they are completely incommensurable. Within the The Good we have defined boundaries, definite shapes, and things are of precise measurement. Within Evil, there are no defined boundaries, there are no inherent shapes, and there is no possibility to accurately measure anything inherent. The entirety of The Good is in opposition to the entirety of Evil. Evil's existence is, in a sense, false. Its existence is the lack of any inherent, defined existence. The Good's existence is completely sound and inherent. From this, it can be seen that it is indeed possible to have a contrary to The Good, which is transcendent to all Existence.

The warmth and dryness of Fire and the cool dampness Water could be seen as contraries, except for the fact that both of them are contingent upon Matter. If they could exist incorporeally, they would be Ideal Forms or Essences which are also contraries. The point here is that, for things to be contrary, the need not share any qualities or be of the same type of thing. Rather, the nature of contrary things lies in their incommensurability.

### **1.8.7      The Necessity of Evil**

Why is it the case that, since Principle Good Exists, Principle Evil must necessarily Exist as well? It is because the cosmos necessarily contains Matter. The cosmos is necessarily comprised of contraries. So, for the Immortal to exist, the cosmos must also have its contrary in the Material. The cosmos then is comprised of a blend of both the Immortal Divinities, and their necessary Material contraries. Plato teaches that what the cosmos receives from the Immortal Divine are the Goods. The cosmos receives Evils from the primordial, formless Material.

From Plato, we learn that Evil is necessarily a part of the cosmos we reside in. This is due to the fact that we (and the things around us) are contingent on so many other superior things to ourselves for our own existence. The things that we are comprised of and all the things we interact with in our daily lives are removed from Real Being. They are mixed with Evil as a result. These Evils are necessarily generated as causal chains emanate things which have existences which are contingent on other things. For example, complex mathematics are logically necessitated by the consequences of simple mathematics. Complex mathematics are also ontologically contingent upon more fundamental, simple mathematics. The necessary generation of more complex things which are also contingent upon more primordial things generates additional and increasingly Evil (i.e. contingent) things. In this sense, Evil is a privation of the fullness and Realness of The Good.

We cannot flee from Evil in a physical way. Wherever we physically go, Evil will be present. Instead, we flee from Evil via the purifying Virtues. We purify ourselves by disassociating with our Material bodies. To do so displaces us from Matter. After all, to be embodied is to be bound up with Matter. Plato defines separation from the body as being among the Intellectual. The Intellectual Ideal Forms and Essences of the Divine are immortal, and we may escape from perishing by assimilating to them.

This also illuminates the necessity of Evil. Since The Good is the only thing which is whole, and since there exists other things within The Good, then it follows that these distinct entities cannot be fully Good. Consequently, the further something is removed from The Good, the less inherently defined and whole (i.e Real) it becomes. The less Real something becomes, the more Evil it becomes. If we travel as far away from The Good as is possible, of course we end up at its polar incommensurable, the Principle Evil.

If there is something which is First (The Good), then there are also things after it. Otherwise, how could it be first? If we take the furthest thing possible from the First, we necessarily end up with the Last. This is when the chain of causality ends. This limit of emptiness (as opposed to fulness) is Matter, and it is Evil.

#### **1.8.8      The Corrupting Nature of Matter**

Many will object to the notion that Matter is the source of Evil in Human Being. They will say that ignorance and desires for Vice are not to be blamed on Matter. Some will say that, even if ignorance and desires for Vice are afflictions of the body, it is only because of the Ideal Forms which the body is participating in. Such detractors will blame Ideal Forms like Heat, Cold, Overabundance (e.g. of poison or germs), and Insufficiency (e.g. of vitamins) for various afflictions. They will argue that it is the state (and consequently form) that the bodily organs are in which produces problems, such as organs being inflamed. They will say that it is the state of certain bodily systems which gives rise to depraved desires, such as lustfulness and gluttony. Ignorance then, would be the consequence of disarrayed sensory organs, the problem being their qualitative state as opposed to their Material nature. In short, they place Evil as a property of the Ideal Forms instead of the Material body.

While this hypotheses (that Evil is of the Ideal Forms) is mistaken, let us permit it for the sake of argument. Consider first that all of the above scenarios are still contingent upon the Matter of the body for their disorder. The Ideal Form of an axe head cannot cut down a tree. It is a Material axe head in the Form of Axe Heads that can chop down a tree. Similarly, only the Material body itself can be physically disordered.

In addition, Ideal Forms coupled with Matter are of a different quality than pure Ideal Forms in of themselves. In the coupling, the newly founded aggregate inherits elements of both Ideal Forms and Matter. As a result, it

can do things which neither can by themselves. Consider that the Ideal Form of Fire cannot set anything ablaze. Indeed, no Ideal Form affects the Material world by itself. They only may interact with the Material via the Matter that they are coupled with. The Matter that an Ideal Form couples with then acts as the medium for which an Ideal Form may directly influence Material things. In being this medium for Ideal Forms, Matter corrupts the purity of the Ideal Form that it is participating in. Matter imparts its nature to the coupling. It does not corrupt the purity of an Ideal Form via application of its opposite, such as in the case when Heat cancels out Cold. Rather, it imparts a portion of Non Real Being to the coupling via its natures as something without inherent properties. It imparts a lack of inherent properties to the mixture in opposition to the inherent properties defined by an Ideal Form. It imparts lack of an inherent shape to forms with defined shape. It imparts imperfections to that which is perfect in of itself. Again, who has ever seen a perfect physical Triangle? What Material thing does not break down and degrade? What Material thing cannot be reshaped? When an Ideal Form presents itself in Matter, it becomes restricted by the limitations of Matter. Ideal Forms in Matter are like food, which when digested, is used to produce blood, cells, and organs. They are transformed into something different from what they originally were. It is this very process by which the imperfection and fragility of Matter corrupt the Ideal Forms. This is the case even when speaking of complex systems such as a Human body.

How is it possible that a full and self contained Ideal Form may be corrupted by Matter? Shouldn't the Ideal Form dominate Matter and make it like itself instead of the other way around? This is not possible, because an Ideal Form is only eternal and perfect by itself. By mixing an Ideal Form with anything inferior to it, it is no longer an Ideal Form, but an aggregate of the Ideal Form and (usually) the Matter it is mixed with.

To dominate the Evils of Matter, a Soul must flee from the Material. Unfortunately, the mixture of Soul with Matter (i.e. Life) diminishes a Soul's ability to think clearly, act wisely, and ultimately harmonize with The Good. For some embodied Souls, their corruption is so profound that it is not possible for them to overcome in this lifetime. The introduced Material desires distract them from Wisdom, and they become impotent. This mechanism can be seen within every individual. For example, when we are hungry, our material desire for food is greater and more distracting than when we are hungry. Almost everyone behaves and thinks differently depending on how satisfied (or not) their Material needs and desires are.

To conclude, we can see that Matter is indeed Evil due to its lack of self contained properties. Principle Evil is then the principle of lacking inherent properties (and thus being subject to endless and infinite change). Individual Evils are variant manifestations of this principle, such as Material things degrading and breaking down over time. Vice, is then the individual variant manifestation of Evil in the Soul. It results from the parts of the Soul which can lose their properties (usually via coupling with Matter). Vice is to Evil as Virtue is to Good. One is the secondary variant manifestation, while the other is the essential principle.

### **1.8.9      How We May Know of Evil**

How can we gain knowledge of Good and Evil? How can we gain knowledge of Virtue and Vice?

As far as Virtue is concerned, we can come to understand virtue via Dialectics and exercising the Intellectual Soul (see notes on Ennead One, Third Tractate, Section 6). How can we learn about Vice? Using Virtue as a guide, we can understand Vice as that which diverges from Virtue. Much like how using a ruler we can discern where a crooked line diverges from a straight path.

Can we gain Intellectual understanding of Vice in of itself?

Vice surely cannot be known Intellectually. Given that it is Evil, and thus incommensurate with Essences and inherent properties, there is by definition nothing concretely Intellectual about it to grasp with the Intellectual Soul. We may then only come to know it via apophatic negation. Put another way, we may only come to see its negative outline wherever Virtue is missing. As for things which are only partially corrupted by a particular Vice,

we can come to know about its Evil by the proportion of it which is lacking in Virtue. If we can ascertain the Virtue which is partially present, and recognize which parts of it are missing, we can then identify the Vice by subtracting the parts of the Virtue which are present from the whole Virtue itself. What is left over can only be Vice. It is just the same as how Ugliness can be discovered via identification of the parts of something Ugly which fail to fully participate in their respective Ideal Form (see Notes on Ennead One, Sixth Tractate, Section 6).

How can we identify Evil, which is completely incommensurate with Ideal Form in every way?

In the case of Evil, we cannot merely identify the Ideal Form partially present for apophatic negation, as there isn't any to be found. We must then, negate all Ideal Forms and inherent properties of any kind to come to any knowledge of Evil. That which has no inherent properties and participates in no Ideal Forms we refer to as Matter. This method of knowing things by what they are not (apophasis) is the only way to come to any knowledge of that which cannot be grasped by the Intellectual Soul. For example, an eye must remove all light from its vision in order to experience darkness. The eye cannot be said to see darkness by definition, as light is required for sight, and darkness necessarily is devoid of light. Yet even though the eye does not see the darkness, it experiences it via the direct experience of an absence of light. In this way, an Intellectual Soul may experience Evil. Not by grasping it via the Ideal Forms, which are necessarily not present in Evil. Rather, by direct experience of the absence of Ideal Form. It is this way which something may experience something else which is completely contrary to itself.

#### **1.8.10      The Inherent Evil of Matter**

How can Matter be evil if it has no properties of its own? Without properties, what is the Evil to be ascribed to?

Matter is said to be a Non Real Being only in so far as it has no inherent properties of its own. It can be on any shape, size, color, temperature, form, and so on. This does not mean that there is nothing that can be said about Matter. Matter may still assume qualities circumstantially, even though they are not inherent to it. For example, a particular piece of Matter may happen to be in a particular shape at a moment in time, even if this shape is not inherent to it.

Such attributes of Matter can be referred to as accidental qualities, since they only ever happen to be the state that Matter is in (as opposed to being necessitated Essentially). These accidental qualities are then reflections of something with more Real Being, namely an Ideal Form. Matter then does not have inherent qualities, but happens to reflect the qualities of whatever form it is in at the time. For example, a particular piece of metal formed into the shape of an axe head only happens to be in the shape of an axe head. It could have been forged into a sword, a nail, a sculpture, or any other shape. The real qualities of an axe head, such as having a wide cutting edge, then belong to the Ideal Form itself and not the Matter which merely happens to resemble it. Because this piece of metal could have been any other shape, it is not accurate to say that its shape reflects inherent properties of it. This is the case for all of Matter. Everything which can be said about Matter is merely accidental. The Matter could have initially been formed in different ways, and can be formed into something different later on. It only just so happens to be in the particular state that it is in at any given point in time. Any particular state Matter finds itself in is never necessitated by any kind of Essence.

So, Matter is not Evil because of some particular state that it is in. Rather, Matter is Evil by definition because it has no inherent state of Being of its own. If there were inherent properties of Matter, it would not be Evil. Matter would be able to fulfil its natural function, consistent with its nature, if it had anything inherent to it (which would be a Good). Rather, Matter can never have a Good because it is contrary to the concept of having properties. It never has a natural function to fulfil, as there is nothing about it which is Essential.

**1.8.11****Evil Cannot Belong to a Soul**

Some may object and argue that to be contrary to having inherent properties (i.e. contrary to Ideal Form) is merely a privation (i.e. lack) of form. If Evil is merely a lack of Good, a privation of Ideal Form, can it be said to have any existence in of itself? After all, a privation is always relative to something else. For example, the concept of a lack of water requires a concept of water for it to make any sense. Otherwise, what exactly would be lacking?

Let us answer this by looking at the case Evil of the Soul. Evil of the Soul (i.e. Vice) is a privation within the Soul, and not something external to the Soul. Evil of the Soul needs no external self existence to be coherent. We can refer to it without issue. Consequently, Principle Evil can also be referred to even if it has no Real Being of its own to refer to.

Similar arguments may be used to deny Matter altogether, or at least deny that Matter is Evil if the argument allows it to exist. On these sorts of views, Evil then has its seat in the Soul as a property.

Let us take this line of thinking to its logical conclusion. Evil in something is the privation of Good in that thing. If Evil of the Soul exists within the Soul itself, then the Soul would lack Good by definition. After all, Evil is a privation of Good. Yet the natural function of the Soul is to Unite with the Good, and its characteristic act is to direct itself towards the Good (see notes on Ennead One, Seventh Tractate, Section 1). If there is a privation of Good within a Soul, then an Evil Soul will be fundamentally contrary to its natural function and characteristic acts. Asserting that there is a privation of Good within a Soul is then an inherent contradiction. This would annihilate the concept of the Soul as a consequence of the fundamental nature of what a Soul is, and what Evil is.

In fact the Soul by fundamentally has much Good in it. Every Soul has ties to the Ideal All Soul. Every Soul engages in its variant Good as a natural consequence of its characteristic acts. It therefore cannot have Evil as a part of its Essence.

**1.8.12****Principle Evil Cannot Be an Accident of Something Else**

What if someone retorts, and argues that Evil of the Soul is not a complete privation of Good, but rather a partial privation of Good? If Evil of the Soul is only a partial privation of Good, then it follows that the Soul possesses both Good and Evil mixed together. Since the Soul would then possess both Good and Evil in part, neither would be their principle form. Both Good and Evil of the Soul would necessarily be accidental to the Soul, and Evil itself would have to be something external to it. For example, could the principle of Coldness be found in something which is also sometimes Hot? No, since Principle Coldness is completely contrary to Principle Hotness. Since Evil of the Soul then reflects a Principle Evil external to it, it cannot be the case that Evil within a Soul is merely a relative privation of Good.

**1.8.13****Evil Is Not Merely an Impediment**

Another hypothesis is that Evil exists as an impediment to the Soul. Evil would then relate to the Soul in the same way that an obstruction in line of sight relates to vision.

Once again, this type of Evil is merely accidental. An obstruction to a line of sight is accidental to vision. Vision certainly does not require any obstructions as a prerequisite. A Soul likewise does not require any sort of obstruction as a prerequisite for it. This definition of Evil is thus insufficient to explain Principle Evil. Just as

Virtues of the Soul are not The Good themselves, but rather variant manifestations of it, so too are Vices of the Soul (i.e. Impediments within the Soul) not Principle Evil itself, but variant manifestations of it.

Virtue is not The Good. The Good is, of course, antecedent and transcendent to Virtue. Virtue is Good and Beautiful via participation in The Good, not because it is The Good itself. So, transcendent above Virtue is The Good. Being contrary to The Good, the nature of Evil is the opposite. So, corrupted and descended below Vice is Principle Evil. Understanding the partial formlessness of Vice then lends understanding (to the degree which is possible) about the perfect formlessness of Evil. We become corrupted by Evil to the degree we participate in Principle Evil. By our corruption, we reside in the unrecognizable, lacking resemblance to the Divine. If the Soul falls completely into Vice, it is transformed into something alien to itself. A Soul with both Vice and Virtue is still Human, with at least some ties left to The Good. Lacking any Virtue at all, the Soul dies as much as is possible for a Soul. It becomes enshrined in formless Matter, taking on a Material nature. Upon separation from the body, it lies asleep face down in Hades. It may only recover when it turns to face The Good once more.

#### **1.8.14     The Descent of the Soul into Matter**

Another alternative hypothesis with regards to Vice is that Vice is weakness in the soul. Proponents of this will say that the Soul full of Vice is unstable. The weak Soul is quick to anger, and equally quick to compromise its own principles. Such a Soul may quickly be directed in negative directions by the desires, appetites', and ignorance which are part and parcel to the body.

What, on this account, does weakness of the Soul consist in? Why do Souls become weak? After all, the weakness specified above are all afflictions of the body. Weakness of a body entails an inability for the body to complete various tasks or resist harm. A weak body may not be able to lift something heavy, or it may become sick very easily. We might apply this concept analogously to the Soul in some way, but if the weakness is of the Soul itself then it must not refer to the body. Weakness of the Soul must be self-contained within the Soul itself. To investigate this. Let us consider the potential causes of Weakness of the soul.

Weakness in a soul cannot be perfectly analogies to weakness in a body. Weakness in a body might be due to insufficient muscle mass, lack of stoutness of frame, or perhaps a compromised immune system. Weakness in a Soul would then have to be in one of three locations.

- a. In the Soul alone, separate from matter.
- b. In the Soul while coupled with matter.
- c. In both the Soul alone and in the Soul coupled with matter (i.e. both a. and b.)

If we consider option a., we realize that this is impossible. Souls separate from matter are Good, and pure. They fulfil their natural functions automatically with their every act. Ruling out a., of course, rules out both a. and b. together. So, we are only left with option b. The Weakness of the Soul then must have its seat in a Soul which is coupled to Matter. The Soul coupled with Matter is weak because it has fallen from its state of purity. The Soul coupled with matter is weak because the Matter has a parasitic effect on the Soul. This implies that the Weakness in the Soul is not a sort of privation. Rather, weakness in the Soul has a substantial presence, like that of a parasite in a host.

Let us further discuss the fall of the Soul so that we can illuminate its weakness. Soul and Matter when coupled occupy the same space, so to speak. It is not the case, for example, that Matter is on Earth while Souls are above it in the air. A Soul separated from all Matter is not physically anywhere. A Soul separated from matter may not affect Matter via forming it in a particular manner. If there is a separation between a Soul and Matter,

that separation is complete.

The Soul contains sever abilities correlated with its different parts. It has its first part, the Intellectual Soul capable of abstract thinking. It also has its middle part, the Reasoning Soul capable of discursive reasoning. Finally, it has its last part, the Unreasoning Soul which can experience sensory perceptions. Matter attempts to enter the Soul, like a beggar trying to enter a palace. Yet each part of the Soul is pure and has Realness (as they are each within Soul). Matter, having no inherent properties of its own, is unable to enter Soul. Instead, Soul imparts form onto Matter. Yet despite however hard the Soul tries, and how much form the Soul imparts on Matter, the inherent transient nature of Matter cannot be negated. The Matter inevitably degrades, shifts shape, and loses whatever form was imparted to it. In turn, this formed Matter, a mixture of Soul and Matter, dilutes the Realness of Soul in this combination. Matter necessitates that this form of this mixture is impermanent and inevitably temporary.

Why would a Soul ever seek out Matter? The Soul seeks Matter as a means to impart form into something. This process allows a Soul to generate Life by animating a Material body. Yet in this process, the Soul becomes mixed with Matter and descends. This mixture loses the eternal nature of the Soul. Losing the perfection of its inherent properties, the Soul is weakened in this mixture. The Soul meets impermanence until it can separate from the Matter it is coupled with. In this process, the parts of the soul become weak and imperfect at thinking abstractly, reasoning discursively, and even sensing.

So it is Matter which ultimately causes Weakness, the resulting Vice, and the consequent Evil of the Soul. Because Evil of the Soul is accidental to the Soul, Evil must exist apart from the Soul and prior to the mixture of Soul and Matter. When the Soul seeks out Matter as a means to create Life, this creation of life is Essentially mixed with Evil. Matter is necessary for a coupling of Soul and Matter (i.e. Life). Yet Matter is fundamentally Evil. Thus, with the creation of Life comes the Evils of Life, such as suffering.

#### **1.8.15 Descent into Matter and Return to The Good**

Those who claim that Matter as defined here does not exist will require a further in depth exposition on Matter in another text.

Those who deny that a Principle of Evil exists, also implicitly deny that The Good exists. How could The Good exist without necessarily implying that which it is not? Such a presupposition denies the possibility of desiring something Good and avoidance of something Evil. It is to deny all Intellectual activity. After all, Intellectual acts direct thought towards Wisdom, which is towards Good and away from Evil. This is why it is said that Wisdom is a Good thing.

There must be a pure Good, pure Evil, and things which are both partly Good and partly Evil. Good and Evil exist on a continuum and are always in perfect proportion. Things may thus be 100% Good (i.e. The Good), 100% Evil (i.e. Principle Evil), or part Good and Part Evil with both parts summing in 100% (e.g. 50% Good, 50% Evil, or 32% Good, 68% Evil, etc.).

What then, is Evil of the Soul?

Since the Soul is perfectly eternal, its Evil must consist in mixture with that which is impermanent and lacking self contained properties. The Soul being perfect and eternal, lacks nothing. Without a lack, how could a Soul experience desire? Without impermanence, how could a Soul experience fear of destruction, actual

destruction, and the resulting pain and sorrow? How could a perfect Soul be wrong, and experience ignorance and illusion? The Soul may only experience these imperfections by mixing with something foreign to it which is imperfect. This mixture provides the Soul with experiences of impermanence and imperfection.

This substance which degrades the Soul is Matter. It tempts the Soul with promises of creation. Through ensouling Matter, the Soul may create Life. Such acts may appear as Good. Even something which is 99% Evil has 1% Good in it. The Good pierces through (even if only a little) to all but Principle Evil. Yet this temptation is like a set of golden chains, alluring but ultimately a trap. Even the Gods may miss the Evil in something when distracted by its Good. On the other hand, even Material Human Beings are not forced to experience Evil alone. They may experience Good as well. The Human Soul may seek Unification with the Divine via the Intellectual. This is the pathway to The Good, and the natural desire of the Soul. By seeing the Beauty in all things, we may remember The Good which we are a part of and direct ourselves back towards it.

## Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One, Ninth Tractate - On Suicide

### 1.9.1

#### **Death is Inevitable, But Suicide is Foolish**

You shall not violently expel your body from your Soul. Put bluntly, suicide is forbidden. Committing suicide burdens the Soul with a nature foreign to it. Wherever the Soul goes after suicide, it will bear the karmic burden of such violence. This is because in the case of suicide, the Soul has not been completely severed from the Material world. The Soul remains stubbornly mingled with the Material until its natural time has come, even after suicide. In contrast, when the Soul naturally separates from the body at the appropriate time, there is no expulsion or division. The Soul merely finds itself dethatched, as the ties which bind it to the Material realm cease to exist.

How then should the Soul flee the Material? This is taught as the path to The Good.

The Soul can only truly be freed from the Material when the golden chains which ensnare it have completely dissolved. This is only achieved when the Soul is no longer in any sort of harmonic resonance with the Material. Put another way, when the Soul no longer desires or identifies with the Material, the Material has no more means to corrupt the Soul into descent.

Disengaging with the desire for Material Goods and ceasing identification with the body cannot be accomplished in a mere single act of willpower. When someone employs violence to prematurely attempt to sever the connection between Soul and body, the body and Soul cannot let each other go. Such actions are not the features of the Wise Sage. The Wise Sage mirrors the Divine by reaching a state of impassibility. Those who commit suicide are anything but impassible. Such actions are always the consequence of grief, sorrow, and anger. These are of course the passions of the body. Such emotions betray the fact that those who commit suicide are still bound to the Material in spirit.

Is it permissible for someone to commit suicide if they feel that their mind is becoming feeble? What if they will no longer be able to effectively engage the Intellectual part of their Soul?

A complete loss of Intellectual faculties is near impossible for the Wise Sage. In the rare cases which it may happen, the Sage should remain impassible. This is part of the inevitable degradation of the ephemeral body. Once again, to feel sorrow and grief at this prospect is to identify with the Material body. To commit suicide as a reaction can be of no assistance in ascension. How could further identification with the body help someone transcend it?

Everyone will die. This is fate. There is no need to meet it prematurely, as if it might not happen. Put succinctly, there is never a reason to commit suicide unless the only alternative is an even more painful imminent death.

As long as someone possess Life, they may pursue the purifying Virtues. It is Wise for everyone to use all of the time that they have to prepare for death. Doing so puts them in the best possible position for what may come after.

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Notes on Plotinus - Ennead One

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